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THE
CHRISTIAN'S
JOY
IN
Finishing his Course.

BY
THOMAS BRADBURY.

LONDON:

Printed for NATH. CLIFF, and
DAN. JACKSON at the Bible and
Three Crowns, near *Mercers Chap-*
pel in Cheapside. M.D.CC.XIII.

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THE
PREFACE.

THE Subject of these Sermons will declare its own Importance from the Title-Page. 'Tis of Universal Concern, and takes into it the Case and Wishes of all Parties, both Sexes, every Age and Degree that makes any Distinction among us. As there's none above the Necessity of Dying, so there are few but what would do it in a Joyful Way. I don't see in the whole Discourse, that I raise any Debate between my Judgment and his that reads it: But the Misery of the Case is this, that Sinners will not think over what they must believe; they are got into the Habit of despising what no Infidelity can make 'em deny.

I have some reason to hope, that the Study of these plain and obvious things has been of Use to my self: I find my

The Preface.

Soul the easier under any Disappointments and Confusions, by employing in the Cares of dying well. And, I trust, it shall always be a Rule with me, to let every thing have the Value now that it will have on a Sick-bed. With this Conduct would I aim at an even Temper under all the Extremes of Life; knowing how little any Applause can add to these final Comforts, or any Reproach abate 'em. Finishing my Course with Joy is a Blessing independent on the World, unconcern'd in what People say of me: May it ever then be with me a small thing to be judg'd of Man's Judgment.

I will add no more but my hearty Wishes that the God of all Grace may follow these Sermons with his Blessing, and if they are useful to any, as my Request is answer'd for 'em, so I have another to 'em: Brethren, pray for us, for we trust we have a good Conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.

T. BRADBURY.

Jan. 21. 1713.

THE

THE
CHRISTIAN'S JOY
IN

Finishing his Course.

SERMON I.

ACTS XX. 24.

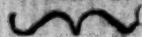
*That I might finish my
Course with Joy*

AND now behold, I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Ghost witnesses in every City, saying, that Bonds and Afflictions abide me.

But none of these things move me, neither count I my Life dear unto my self, so that I might finish my Course with Joy,
B and

The CHRISTIAN'S JOY

Serm. I.



and the Ministry which I have receiv'd of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the Grace of God.

I Have read you so much of this heavenly Speech as makes up the full Sense of those Words that are taken out of it: *I go bound in the Spirit*, saith he, *to Jerusalem*; some way or other impress'd with a sense of his Duty in that Journey, which is what a good Man may expect. Whether you understand the word *Spirit* of his own Soul that receiv'd the Conduct, or of the Holy Ghost that gave it, it comes to the same thing: Nor is it too much to admit the latter of these, because this History of the Apostles is full of such accounts. When the Eunuch returned from Jerusalem by the way of the Desert, it was the Spirit that said unto Philip, *Go join thyself unto his Chariot*. And when Peter had his Trance and Vision upon the House-top, the Spirit said unto him, *Three Men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, nothing doubting, for I have sent them*. This way of speaking was so familiar to them in that Age, that when he vindicates his eating with the Gentiles, 'tis upon this Fact, *The Spirit bad me go with them, nothing doubting*. And as he directed them what Course to take,

so

Acts viii.
29.

Ch. x. 9.
20.

Ch. xi. 12.

so this can scarce be call'd any Inclination of their own, because sometimes it over-rul'd every thing of that kind. Serm. I.

They went throout Phrygia, and the Region of Galatia, and were forbidden Ch. xvi.

of the Holy Ghost to preach the Word in Asia. And after they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go to Bythinia: but the Spirit suffer'd them not. And as it was his Office to bring about the Conversion of Souls, so he seems to take upon him something of the Providential part; not only to bless the Ministry of the Word, but to order where it shall be preach'd.

I can't but own, that the foolish Pretences we have heard upon this Head, of being mov'd by the Spirit to do things that are either impossible or ridiculous or wicked, have brought the Expression it self into a Jest: but it is no Argument against a Thing, that Satan and sinful Men have abus'd it; I should rather think the better than the worse of it upon that account; for if it did not bear a peculiar Excellence, we should not have had so many Counterfeits. Thus then those words will be capable of such an Exposition: *Paul purposed in the Spirit, after he had gone through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there I must also see Rome.* This Scheme that he laid out for himself

Ch. xix. 21.

Serm. I.

was no more than what he had learnt from several Visions, as we have reason to suppose by one of them that was given to confirm it, *When the Lord stood by and said, Be of good cheer Paul; for as thou hast testify'd of me at Jerusalem; so thou must bear Witness of me also at Rome.* And this may be the meaning of what he now saith, *Behold, I go bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem.*

There are several Impulses that may be unaccountable to others, nay perhaps to our own Reason, as this was. Every one of the Company, in the next Chapter, would have dissuaded him from that Visit: when *Agabus the*
 Ch. xxi. 11. *Prophet both foretold and represented the manner of the Jews dealing with him, He took Paul's Girdle and bound his own Hands and Feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, Thus shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the Man that owns this Girdle, and shall deliver him into the Hands of the Gentiles. And when we heard these things, both we and they also of that Place besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.* And yet you find, tho he felt all the tenderness of Nature, and had learnt as much of Courtesy as Education could give a Man, there's something of value with him which he can neither show nor disobey: He was *bound in Spirit*. For he lets them know, their weeping might
 break

in Finishing his Course.

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break his Heart, but not his Design; he Serm. I.
was ready *not only to be bound, but to*

die at Jerusalem for the Name of the Ver. 13.

Lord Jesus. So that the Conviction
was alone with himself, others could
not see what he felt; and therefore at
last they resolve it into a Divine Impres-

sion. And *when we saw he would not*
be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The Ver. 14.

Will of the Lord be done. And why

should we think that a good Man's
providential Directions may not be as
particular as his Sorrows or Comforts?

We can be either in Pain or Gladness,
and keep it all within: *The Heart un-*

derstands its own bitterness, and a

Stranger does not intermeddle with its

Joy. And why may not the Instructions

that God gives be as Secret as these?

The People that press'd him to consult

his own Safety, do not put the Answer

upon a perverseness of Temper, a Re-

solution to be destroy'd, a Neglect of

making them easy, a want of due Care

about himself; but as he pleaded *the*

Bonds, the Impressions that *the Spi-*

rit had given him, so they call it *the*

Will of the Lord.

And yet you may further observe,

his Resolutions for Duty were not

guided by a particular View of what

he should meet with, *Not knowing the*

things that shall befall me there. But

however, to take off all hopes of being

well

Serm. I. well receiv'd by his Countrymen, he saith, That *the Holy Ghost* had given him a general Warning, witnessing that in every City Bonds and Afflictions would abide him. The World was all of a piece, because he that is *the God of this World* had blinded their Eyes. The manner of their Treatment he could not foresee; but if they did make him a Prisoner, and pursue him as a Criminal, 'tis what he had no surprise at; he was a long while ago taught to reckon upon such Usage, as

Acts ix. 15,
16. Christ tells *Ananias*, *He is a chosen Vessel unto me, to bear my Name before the Gentiles, and the Kings, and the Children of Israel. For I will show him how great things he shall suffer for my Name sake.* And therefore as this is nothing New, so it's nothing dreadful to one who had been thrown into the Habits of Persecution, and Endur'd the Cross of Christ almost as soon as he Preach'd it.

None of these things move me, ἡμεῖς λῶγον ποιῶμαι, I make no reckoning of any thing, I don't bring it into the Account, it passeth for nothing with me, neither count I my Life dear to my self; and yet that's all a Creature can have in this World: But there's something else that's dearer than living, *to finish my Course with Joy, and the Ministry I have received, to testify the Gospel of the*

the

in Finishing his Course.

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the Grace of God. I must observe Serm. I. that there are two Notions we may have of the Person who spoke these words.

1. You'll be apt to consider him as a Minister separated to serve the Lord in the Gospel of his Son, and then there's but one Design goes through the whole Verse; and what he here calls *his Course*, is the same thing with *his Ministry*; and *finishing* the one, is no more than *fulfilling* the other; that is, as he explains it, to testify the Gospel of the Grace of God. The Grace of God as a Doctrine is made known by the Gospel, and as a Principle is conveyed by it. His Office had been to testify of this, to tell it abroad, and keep close to his Instructions; *not go beyond the Line of all things committed to his Hand*. The Word supposeth that he said no more than what was plainly told him; for to have exceeded this would not have been a Testimony but an Invention. As he had kept steddy thus far, and *declar'd to them the whole Counsel of God*, so he wisheth to make no departure from the Rule hereafter, but go on to the very end, *saying no other things than Moses in the Law, and the Prophets did write*; and opening that Gospel that he had received, *not of Man, or by Man, but by the Revelation of Jesus Christ*. As he had

Serm. I. acted all along with his eye to this Direction, so now at last he would *finish his Course with Joy*, that he might have the praises of *a good and faithful Servant*: A good Servant for designing so well, a *faithful* one for keeping so close to the Rule.

And without doubt, if you give the Words no other Interpretation, they agree to that which is a certain Duty. They who have the Honour of this Employment may take an Example: Here's one that holds on Preaching, and resolves to do so to the End, who set a greater Rate upon his Work than his Life.

He could not think when he was *an Ambassador in Bonds*, that *the Word of God* ought to be bound. When he was driven out from one Place to another, yet he did not lay down the Apostle in taking up the Exile. He might have kept out of all this Persecution, and have had *a certain dwelling Place* as well as others, if he would have either dropt the Ministry, or brought his Zeal within Compass. He had ways of endearing himself, if he could have complied with the Temptations of the World, or the *Prudentials* of some Churches. But his Ministry was that which stuck by him, this set him above the Danger of being either hector'd by Strangers,
or

or soften'd by Acquaintance. *We can* Serm. I.
do nothing against the Truth, but for 2 Cor. xiii.
the Truth. When false Brethren came 8.
in unawares to spy out their Liberties,
and privily bring them in Bondage, he
would not give place by Subjection, Gal. ii.
not for an Hour; that the Truth of
the Gospel might continue with them.
And when Peter, James, and John,
who seem'd to be Pillars, shrunk in
complaisance with some of the super-
stitious Jews, and carried the matter
so artfully, that Barnabas was like to
be led away with the dissimulation, he
withstood them sharply, because they did
not walk uprightly according to the
Truth of the Gospel: but spake to Pe-
ter before them all, for he was to be
blamed. He understood no submission to
 the chief of the Apostles, to him that
 had the Keys of the Kingdom of Hea-
 ven, the Vicar of Christ upon Earth.
 It was not their Opinion, but his own
 Ministry that lay with so much weight
 upon him: Tho he lov'd to stand fair
 with them, and therefore went up to
 Jerusalem on purpose to see Peter, and
 communicated to him and the rest of
 them, who were Men of Reputation, the
 Gospel that he had preach'd amongst the
 Gentiles, lest he should run in vain: Yet
 he makes a stand against any shuffling,
 how Reverend soever the Person may
 be that was guilty. He hated any lit-
 tle

Serm. I.

the compliances, that to humour a more superstitious Party would leave an Infamy upon the rest. And of so much Importance was it with him to run this Course well, that the Gospel of the Uncircumcision was committed to him. He being the Apostle of the Gentiles, magnifies his Office, and will not allow any Contempt upon the poor People, among whom he labour'd. For the Case was this, that before certain came from James, Peter did eat with the Gentiles; but after they were come, he withdrew himself, fearing them of the Circumcision; and other Jews likewise dissembled with him. Now the Design of this was to bring on a needless Uniformity, or as he calls it, a compelling the Gentiles to live as the Jews do. Thus faithfully did he fulfil his Ministry, and he hopes to finish it with Joy, to be as steady to the end as he had been thus far.

And it is this that he adviseth Timothy to, to continue in the Word, be instant in season and out of season; to do the Work of an Evangelist, to make full proof of his Ministry, give himself up to these things, to take heed both to his Soul and Doctrine; and by continuing in them, he should save himself and them that heard him. The Parable that our Lord gives us of the good and faithful Servant, carries this as the

the chief Sense of it. He speaks it of Serm. I. Ministers; some are slothful Servants, and say, *My Lord delays his coming*! Mat. xxiv. that Infidelity sours into Persecution, ^{41.} they beat their fellow-Servants, and then it floats into Debauchery; they eat and drink with the Drunkards. Now the reverse Character is of a good Steward, a good Householder that brings forth out of his Treasure things new and old; and a good Servant that gives them their portion of Meat in due season. He supposeth, as Death will overtake the other in his Abominations, and cut him asunder when he is cutting a Church asunder, so it shall remove This from full Service; and blessed is that Servant whom his Lord, when he comes, shall find so doing.

Indeed you may think there are very few in our Assemblies concern'd in this Application of the Text. I am not now speaking to a Congregation of Ministers, such as labour in the Word and Doctrine; therefore what Paul said in that Character might have been spar'd. But allow me to call God for a Record upon my own Soul; and do you remember what I hope I shall never dare to forget, That the way for a Preacher to finish his Course with Joy, is to fulfil the Ministry that he hath receiv'd. The Work of the Ministry might be call'd his Course. It

Serm. I. It is so in other places, where he bids them hold forth the Word of Life, that in the day of Jesus Christ he might rejoice that he had not run in vain, nor labour'd in vain. And when he was

Phil. ii. 14.
2 Tim. iv. 6.

ready to be offer'd up, and the time of his departure was at hand, he had fought a good Fight, he had finish'd his Course. This he had not done as a Christian, but it seems to mean that he was closing up his publick Character. He had no more Sermons to preach, no more Epistles to write; what was now his Duty, regarded him rather as a Believer than a Minister.

2. You may take these words in a more extensive Sense, so as to make them the Concern of every Believer; and what the Apostle professeth for himself, ought to be the Care of us all. His Ministry put him into a relative Life, *He became a Servant to all, a Debtor to the Wise and Unwise*: And hence there was a Necessity upon him, yea woe unto him if he preached not the Gospel. But then besides that, he had a Case of his own: and as he tells Timothy of saving himself, as well as those that hear him; so you find him an Example to all Persons in a Publick Character, that they do not run into that Fault the Church complains of; *My Mother's Children were angry*

Cant. i. 6.

angry with me, they made me the Keeper *Serm. 13*
of their Vineyards, but my own Vine-
yard have I not kept. Thus when he
adviseeth the Corinthians, so run that ye *1 Cor. ix. 25,*
may obtain; in this he was not only *26, 27.*
their Director, but Partner: I run,
not as uncertainly, so fight I, not as one
beating the Air. This does not refer
so much to his Ministerial Labours, as
the Care he had of his own Soul:
which will appear by the Reason he
gives for it; I keep under my Body, and
bring it into Subjection, lest by any means
after I have preach'd to others, I my self
be a Castaway.

And indeed the Words I am upon
will not only bear this Sense, but they
plainly point to it. Here's an Apostle
tells them that he hath Bonds and
Afflictions in view. He believes that
some time or other he shall lose his
Life for the sake of the Gospel: Now
that which is most upon his Heart,
is to close both the Christian and the
Minister with all the Joy he can; that
his last act as a Believer, and as an A-
postle, may be pleasant ones. The
former of these he calls *Finishing his*
Course, and the latter *Fulfilling the Mi-*
nistry that he had receiv'd. He speaks
of them as distinct from one another,
as two different things, *That I may fi-*
nish my Course with Joy, and *the Mi-*
nistry that I have receiv'd to testify the
Gospel

Serm. I.

Prov. xxii.
19.

Gospel of the Grace of God. So that you see the Words mean something that is not purely Apostolical, but what is common to Believers. My Design in giving you this Exposition of them, is that you may take your selves concern'd. As the Wise-man saith, *That thy Trust may be in the Lord, have I not made known to thee this day, even to thee?* Do not put it upon his greater Attainments, His *seeing the Lord*, his doing Signs and Wonders: These are out of our Imitation: For, *Are all Apostles, Are all Prophets, Are all Workers of Miracles?* But the things here are what *he says as a Man*. There's no need of eminent Gifts, Visions, and Honours out of the way, to make you finish your Course with Joy. You may die in Peace, without being rais'd to such a Figure in the Church as he had.

From this Account you'll see how justly I may give you the Words in a Doctrine.

It is a Matter of the greatest Concern to every good Man, that he finish his Course with Joy. Before I lay down the chief Heads of Method, I will lead you into the Design by several Propositions.

I. Every Christian hath a *Course* to run. This is a Metaphor oftentimes us'd in the Old Testament. *David speaks of walking before God in the Land*

in Finishing his Course.

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Land of the Living, running the way Sermon I.
of his Commandments; and oftentimes
begs to have his Feet guided into the way
of Peace. The Metaphor may be turn'd
these two ways.

First, You may refer it to a *Journey*
in which the Believer hath set out;
tho he hath not got to the end of it,
he's a going on. The Scripture speaks
to him and of him as a Traveller.

Secondly, The Allusion is very strong
here, as in other Places, to the *Olympick Games*, that had their Institution
for the Encouragement of all manly
Toils; such as Fighting, Wrestling,
Leaping, and Running. Each of these
have their Fitness in the Use they are
apply'd to. The Christian's Work is
a *Journey*, from its Continuance; it's a
Race, from the Zeal he ought to have
in it. Neither of these alone will com-
prehend all that we mean by the Reli-
gion of a good Man. A Journey may
be carry'd on with Leisure and Slow-
ness: This does not come up to the
Strife we read of, to *giving all Dili-
gence, and taking Heaven by Force.* A
Race is a Violence upon Nature, but
it is soon over; there's a long Prepa-
ration for it, but the thing it self is
a Strain and away. In the *Grecian*
Games it could be no more than about
one Hour in four Years. Now this
doth not answer the other Descriptions
that

Serm. I. that we have of Piety, of being faithful unto Death, steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord; Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith.

Rev. ii. 10.

1 Cor. xv.

ult.

Heb. xii. 2.

What we mean by the Christian Course, carries both these in it. It is a Race, and therefore he's to lay aside every Weight, and the Sin that easily be-sets him, that he may run it. I will employ all his Care to do it fast enough; and yet it hath the Length of a Journey, it will hold him his whole Life: He doth not come to the end of it, till he gets to that Place which is call'd *his long Home*. And this Application of the Words is more certain to a Christian, than it can be to a Minister. He that labours in the Word and Doctrine, may choose to have this among *his last Works*; that the Interval may be but short between the Pulpit and Paradise, between reporting the things where *Angels desire to look*, and looking at them our selves. This, I say, hath been the wish of several Ministers, that Preaching might be some of their last Breath. But perhaps God lays 'em aside from it by old Age or Infirmities. Sometimes he doth this as a Judgment upon a People: *Thy Mouth shall be dumb, and thou shalt be no more a Reprover to them, because they are a rebellious House*. A Man's Heart may

may be fully pointed to his Service, *Serm. I.* but Nature cannot keep up to Grace; tho *the Treasure* is the same, yet *the earthen Vessel* that holds it decays: The Memory is gone, the Breath cut short, and when Strength fails it's time to call an old Labourer home: And before he gets thither, he may be laid aside, and only wait in a private way till his great Change comes. But thus it can't be with the Christian, there are no spare Months from the Course that he is in. There may be Alterations in his Capacities, and his Profession not so publick as it us'd to be; but still he's on his Journey, till Christ hath receiv'd him to himself. He is no better than a *Pilgrim and Stranger*, till he obtains *Heb. xi. 13.* the Promises: all that he knows of them here, is *seeing them afar off*. His Course is not finish'd till he gets where he would be.

2. This Course is to be finish'd. *Verily there is an End, and thine Expectation shall not be out off.* *Psal. xxxvii.* And for this I have not only the Voice of Grace but of Nature. Tho in one Sense 'tis Immortal, and can have no end. The Christian carries his Principles along him into another World; from thence they come, and thither he returns them. They were like Messengers sent down to fetch up the Soul, that He might live where They were born. If
you

Serm. I. you will say, that he's in a Course of Love and Faith, a Reverence of God's Majesty, and a Delight in his Goodness; if it is this you mean by the Word, there's no finishing of it. Death leaves him more employ'd than it found him: It carries him into another Sphere, but 'tis with the same Faculties, upon the same Object, only the one is stronger, and the other nearer.

But when Christianity is express'd by the Metaphor of a Course, it rather belongs to that which is confin'd to this World; All the Difficulties, the Cares, the Toil of Religion. A Race was a thing honourable enough, worthy of the highest Princes to come into it: But yet there was a great deal to make it painful. And so a Journey may be taken on a lawful and a pleasant Design. A Man goes chearfully into it, especially when he hath something in view which makes it worth his while. But still the dirty Roads, the long Stages, the hard Fare, and the Danger of Travelling will be of some weight to make him uneasy. And so it is in Religion: We set out upon the best Errand that ever People can have: 'Tis a Journey to a good House, 'tis a Race for a noble Prize; but yet the Luggage of a corrupt Nature, the Roughness of a sinful World make the
Motions

in Finishing his Course.

19

Motions more heavy than we could *Serm. I.*
with them. Remember there will be
an end of this Course, Remember it
with an Awe, Remember it with a
Rapture.

Consider, Professors, what you are
now doing will be soon over: There's
a Last Prayer and Sermon for every
one of you: As this Life is a Course,
an Experiment that you make, so it
will end in a little time. And what-
ever is your Lot beyond it, yet the
Course it self is finish'd; you are no
more upon a Trial, but your State is
determin'd for ever. The Case will
then be clear as to you all, whether
you reach the Mark or no. And be
glad *ye Children of Zion*, that tho tra-
velling and running takes up so much
of your Zeal and Time, yet there's to
be an end of it; you are to be em-
ploy'd about this sort of Work in Hea-
ven, but 'tis no longer a Race, the Ha-
zard of losing it is all over: The un-
easy Part of your Care is left behind
you. Religion is no more to be
wrought out with *Fear and Trembling*.
*Be patient then, my Brethren, and esta-
blish your Hearts, for the Coming of the
Lord draws nigh; that Coming that
will make it otherways with you than
now it is.*

James v.

3. The Believer is some way or o-
ther active in this Affair. 'Tis made
his

Serm. I. *his own Work* to finish this Course; tho
 this is to be understood in such a man-
 ner as will consist with God's Supre-
 macy, and our Patience. 'Tis not our
 Business to give over running, or call
 for that Death which will put an end
 to it. A Servant may *earnestly desire*
the Shadow, and an Hireling look for the
Reward of his Work; but we must as
an Hireling, accomplish our Day. The
Number of our Months is with him:
 we are purely passive in the Business of
 Dying, not to wish for it one moment
 sooner, and yet very readily meet it
 when it comes; nay we are oblig'd to
 take all proper Methods for the saving
 of our Lives, and carrying them to a
 greater Length. The Apostle had no
 dread of Death; says he, *If they can*
prove the things whereof they accuse me,
I refuse not to die. But yet as indiffe-
 rent as he was to his Life, he thought
 it too great a Compliment to his Ene-
 mies: *No Man, says he to Festus, may*
deliver me into thy Hands. And when
 in Asia he was press'd above measure and
 beyond Strength, insomuch that he de-
 spair'd even of Life, he had the Sentence
 of Death in himself, that he should learn
 not to trust in himself, but in God that
 rais'd the Dead, who did deliver him
 from so great a Death, and who, he
 hopes, would still deliver him. He
 calls it indeed the time of his Depar-
 ture,

Job vii.

AG. XXV. 11.

2 Cor. i. 7.

ture, as if he was active in it; but yet *Serm. I.*
 he represents it as a being *offer'd up*, to
 show that he was so far passive: nay,
 God expects a full Submission to his
 Will in this Case. 'Tis not for us to
 say we have liv'd long enough, either
 upon the account of Mercy or Duty:
 That this World is not worth staying
 in: There's no more for us to do.
 That's only a random Thought; we
 must have the Patience to keep out of
 Heaven, till the wise Father of the
 House thinks fit to call us into it: nor
 are we to imagine that it lies in our
 Judgment when to give over Work,
 or determine that we have done e-
 nough: The Day of Grace is like that
 of Nature, 'tis an Ordinance of Hea-
 ven. *The Sun knows his going down.*

But yet in another Sense it is our
 own Act: We are not *like Sheep* to be
laid in the Grave, cut off in Stupidity;
sleeping the Sleep of Death, dozing out
 into Eternity: *Dies a Christian as a*
Fool dies? No, The Apostle would fi-
 nish his own Course with Joy. Tho the
 killing of him was the Work of a Ty-
 rant, and he did no more than receive
 the Blow, yet he had something to do
 even at the last. Thus we read of Old
 Testament Believers, that *they all died*
in Faith, not only in a State of Faith,
 but in the actual Use of that Grace:
 That's the final Effort, the thing their
 Souls

Serm. I. Souls did in the moment of parting with the Body. Do not imagine, my Brethren, that your Work is over; tho you may have liv'd long and liv'd well, yet you have never died, and that's to be done well too. You are in a good Course; and thus far it may be said thro the Grace of God, *you have run well*: but this is what you are to *finish*; and do not suppose that the Soul hath least to Do when it hath most to Get; tho the great Work may be over, the Change is wrought, you have *pass'd from Death to Life* in a Spiritual Sense a long while ago, and here's nothing now but bare dying before you; yet still there's a way of doing it that's both your Duty and Comfort.

4. This is to be done *with Joy*. You will easily know what I mean by this, when I have distinguish'd it from some things that really lead the way to it.

(1.) It is not the Purity of Religion, or a true Principle of Grace; tho that is suppos'd, and happy is the Person that dies with That, however it may be with him as to the Testimony of his own Conscience.

(2.) It does not signify any Pleasure that we have had in the Exercise of Religion, and the Continuance of our Course. We have *heard the joyful Sound, and walk'd on in the Light of God's Countenance* for several Years; but

but this is not *finishing* the Course: Serm. I.

There's a new Joy springing up then. 'Tis possible you may have sweet Communion with God in your Life, and yet for wise and good Reasons he may withhold from you those Pleasures upon a Death-bed he hath convey'd to others. I tell you such a case may happen, it hath sometimes been so: Nay thus it was with the greatest Instance of Religion that ever the World had, our Lord Jesus Christ. He that never left him alone before, did it upon the Cross: He that could always say, *the Father that hath sent me is with me*; then complains, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* This Apostle no doubt had been fill'd with all Consolation: He had met with a Joy and Hope in believing; but yet there's something more that he's aiming at, to have one sweet Hour in the End, not only to continue but to *finish his Course* with Joy.

(3.) You must distinguish this from the Safety that a good Man dies with. If he hath not these Pleasures so full as others may, yet nevertheless the Foundation of God stands sure, having this Seal, *The Lord knows them that are his.* He may go secure enough into Heaven, and have his Evidences clear to himself, when he is some way hinder'd, tho not from reading them, yet from tast-
ing

Serm. I. ing all that Sweetness there is in them. The Apostle *knew in whom he had believ'd*, but he would feel this when he came to die, which was a finishing his Course with Joy.

(4) 'Tis not the Pleasure of Heaven, for then the Course is all over. Those are Satisfactions that we have no room for in a Death-bed. 'Tis a Joy that lies between what we meet with in our Journey, and what we shall have in our Father's House. 'Tis not that upon the Road, nor is it that at home; tho it's very great and desirable, yet it does not come up to *the Joy of our Lord*. This is not what we feel, but what we then *enter into*.

SER-

S E R M O N II.

ACTS xx. 24.

—That I might finish my
Course with Joy.—

THE Method, into which I would cast my Design, is,
I. To show you what it is
to finish our Course with Joy.

2. Why a Christian values it at such a rate, as to prefer it above Life, and every other Comfort.

3. In what Cases it is most usual for God to give it with a peculiar Sweetness.

4. How a Person may hope to come by it, or what it is owing to. This last Head will be an Application to the three former; but I now begin with the first of them.

I. What are we to understand by this Joy, that a Good Man desires to die with? You have heard how it is distin-

Serm. II. distinguish'd from the *Peace* we have *in believing*, and from that which flows in upon the Visions of a better World; but it certainly comprehends these two things:

1. That the Christian's own Soul is the Seat of this Joy.
2. That dying it self is the Occasion of it.

1. When we speak of a Good Man's *finishing his Course with Joy*, 'tis to be meant of something in his own Soul; 'tis all within himself. It may here be truly said, *a Stranger does not intermeddle with this Joy*. Not but that his going off in such a way will make the Satisfaction very general. As upon the Return of the Prodigal, the Father, the Son, the Servants, *they all began to be merry*; so the Pleasure will diffuse it self thro' the whole Family both in Earth and Heaven. They that stay behind will *strengthen their Hands in God*, when they see how well the Holy Spirit hath clos'd his Work in others, as I shall show you afterwards; and the Angels will rejoice to get one more into their Company. Nay, 'tis a Jewel in the Crown that stands upon a Saviour's Head; when he is doing his last Work upon the Believer, 'tis with that Reputation to himself that the Assembly above are call'd out: *The Daughters of Zion go forth to behold King*

Prov. xiv. 10

Cant. iii. 11.

in Finishing his Course.

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Serm. II.

King Solomon, and the Crown he appears with in the Day of his Espousals, and in the Day of the Gladness of his Heart. Nor is the Father unconcern'd in this Joy; for he rests in his Love, and rejoiceth over them with Singing. Zeph. iii. 17.

But these are Pleasures out of my way from this Text. I am here limited to that which the Christian feels when he is just winding up his Care and Duty. There may be all the rest when this is wanting. God's People here below may have better hopes of us than we have about our selves; and the Angels who know their Charge, will be ready to receive those Souls with a shout, that do not yet understand their own Safety. The Case may be something dark to us, when it is all clear to them. But it is more desirable, when we have the Charity of our Brethren upon Earth, and die under the notice of those in Heaven; to have some Assurance of this in our selves. And the Apostle useth it as an Argument for proving our own Work, that every Man may have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. Gal. vi. 4.

2. The Occasion of this Joy is his dying. It is suited to that awful Turn. It would not do sooner, nor shall we need it later. 'Tis properly a travelling Cordial just fitted to our passing over, and the Moment that a Man

C 2

goes

Berm. II. *goes to his long Home.* Not that it gives us any pleasure in Death for its own sake; that is still the Fruit of Sin, and will be the Horrour of Nature to us all in some degree or other: for Soul and Body to leave an Embrace that hath been so near, can scarce be without Reluctance in the best; but, allowing for Flesh and Blood, Good People have had a Joy even in that Dissolution. Tho Nature hath done its part in Groans and Pains, yet there hath been something else to mingle the Work of dying with Ingredients of another sort. They have felt a Gladness in themselves, and have told it to those about them. Now this may take into it three things.

(1.) A Submission to the Hand of God, which, tho it is the least that can be said of a Christian, yet 'tis more than the Generality of the World arrive to. *Moses died according to the Word of the Lord;* that is, the Lord bid him die, and he did so. When God calls the Believer away, he hath nothing to say against it. Dying is an act of Duty, a part of his Obedience; 'tis the last regard he pays to the Law in this World, for *he dies in Faith.* We are all of us impress'd with a Belief of Mortality, 'tis a Conviction that we cannot shake off; but when it comes to the Trial, how hard is it to meet the Command? Now here the Christian

Christian is in a better way than o- Serm. II.
thers, he pays this Tribute to the
great Law of Nature; *Death hath*
pass'd upon all Men, for that all have
finn'd. He hath liv'd with dying
Thoughts a long time. He knew God
would be obey'd this way, that it was
appointed for all Men once to die; and
he does it not with a Stupidity that o-
thers are under, who are laid in the
Grave like Sheep, without any think-
ing; but he considers it as the final
Act of his Duty. *No Man of us lives* Rom. xiv. 7
to himself, and none dies to himself. He
is under a higher Rule than his own
Choice: His Soul belongs to another,
and to him he'll resign it: His Body is
owing to the Dust, from thence it
came, and thither he lets it return.

A Good Man may think it desirable
to tarry a little longer here, as David
prays, *Spare me a while, that I may re-* Psal. xxxix.
cover Strength before I go hence, and be ult.
no more; and *Hezekiah,* when he re-
ceiv'd the Sentence of Death, turn'd
his Face to the Wall, and wept sore. But Isa. xxxviii.
whatever Opinion he may have of the
Service that is yet to be done, he leaves
it all with infinite Wisdom. He knows
the God that *fashion'd him,* hath a
Right to bring him to Dust again. Nay,
the Conviction goes farther, that he
will do it; *Thou wilt bring me to the*
House appointed for all Living; and the

Serm. II. Redemption that he hath in Christ Jesus is so far from weakening this Authority, that it does but confirm it. As he is *bought with a Price*, so he must be deliver'd into the Hands of him

Gal. xxi. 5. that paid it. *Into thy Hand do I commit my Spirit, for thou hast redeem'd it, O God of Truth.* Here's a Saviour that claims him upon all the Arguments of his Cross, his Resurrection, and his *Rom. xiv. 9.* Glory; for to this end Christ both died and rose again, and reviv'd, that he might be the Lord both of Dead and Living. This is one thing contain'd in our Joy, a Submission to the Command of God; *It is the Lord; let him do what seems him good:* but it takes more into it, and that is,

(2.) A Choice and Delight in the thing it self. What there is to raise this Temper, I am to show you under another Head. But I would now go no further than affirm that so it is. *Phil. i. 23.* The Apostle had a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which was far better: not that this Inclination was ever the Guide of his Duty, for he was still in a Strait between two, and what to chuse he knew not; but from his words we may conclude, if God had told him he must then go, the Summons would have been very welcome. He knew so well on which side the Advantage lay, as to determine that to die was gain. And

And thus does the Believer express his Serm. II.
Temper: "Whilst I am here, I would
" think my self upon a Stage of Du-
" ty. Sometime or other I must be
" gone; whether *this Sickness is unto*
" *Death* or no, I know not, nor do I
" care, any further than *the Son of Man*
" *may be glorify'd thereby.* If I reco-
" ver, may it be to his Service; if I
" remove, may it be to his Arms."

The Christian is not to complain of Life, as if God laid too great a Weight upon him; nor should any Selfishness come into his Desires, that he would be *where the Weary are at Rest*, merely because he is tir'd out: but yet when the awful Day opens to him, that *he must die*, he may then lift up his Head and rejoice, without any Disobedience to the Will of God. To hasten Death would be criminal, but to meet it is no more than Duty. For the Believer is now in the Field of Battle, and it is not for him to limit the Campaign, or say he hath fought long enough; but when the Great Captain calls him up, he then unbraceth as fast as he can, and changeth the *Good Fight* for a better Crown.

(3.) This Joy consists in a Victory over those Fears that would darken the Soul when it's a going off. There will perhaps be some Mixture of these to the very last; and the Reasons for

Serm. II. it are several; because we have not dropt the Body of Sin; because there must be a difference between the Assurance of a Death-bed, and that of Heaven; and because the Work of Grace is still under its Imperfections: And lastly, because we are yet within the reach of the Enemy. But what I mean by a Victory, is no more than a Predominancy of Joy: tho we have our Doubts and Sorrows, yet the other Principle hath got the better of them, it keeps uppermost: There is an Ever-

lasting Consolation and a good Hope thro Grace. Now the Man that *finishest his Course with Joy*, tho he may be assaulted by Satan, and hath not yet thrown off his Unbelief, yet the Testimony that the Spirit of Grace gives in is above them both. He's almost ready to say, *O Enemy, Destructions are come to a perpetual End! thou hast thrust sore at me, that I might fall, but the Lord hath help'd me.*

Psal. ix. 6.

cxviii. 13.

The Believer perhaps hath not so much Assurance as he could wish, but he values his little above all the Riches in the World. Satan tells him he is a Sinner, which is true enough; that he hath not dealt faithfully in the Covenant; but in that case he sees his way to the relief of a Righteousness that will do. The Law roars against him, crying out for Vengeance upon a Wretch

in Finishing his Course.

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Serm. II.

Wretch that hath broken it; but he bears down that Voice with a *Blood that speaks better things*. The Enemy tells him that such Duties as he hath done, so few, so short, so empty, cannot deserve Heaven: He confesseth the Charge, but yet hath his Reply, that *Eternal Life is the Gift of God thro Jesus Christ our Lord*. And when those Fears arise, "How shall I get up to a City that is so far above me?" Nature faileth me, and what Grace will do on the other side, I cannot tell:" He *stays himself upon the Lord his God*. "Remember, O my Soul, who is to receive thee to himself:" He is not only gone before to *prepare the Place*, but I see him, I see him come on to take his Charge, "that where he is, I may be also."

Rom. vi. 23.

Isa. l. 10.

II. Why should the Christian value such a Joy as this is? 'tis soon over. He begins not to have it till very late, and he quickly gets into a State where he is above it: Had it run thro a Life of Duty, and come at that time when he was serving God or his People; or had it been those *Pleasures that flow in Rivers, and last for evermore*; we should not wonder at all the happy Images that a Good Man hath of it. 'Tis among the Infelicities of the Hypocrite, that his Joy is but for a moment,

Serm. II. and what I am now to speak of, doth
 not continue much longer: and yet
 this Apostle makes it one of the things
 that he prefers to all the Grandure and
 Pleasures in the World. In the view
 of this, he was *not mov'd by the Bonds
 and Afflictions that would abide him.*
 Nay, this made him *not count his very
 Life dear unto him.* And that he judg'd
 well, will appear from three things.

Psal. lxxi.
 17, 18.

1. This Joy in the Act of dying is
 what we shall need to bear us up un-
 der the Weight of that Great Change.
 How moving is the Argument of that
 Petition, "O God, thou hast taught
 " me from my Youth, and hitherto
 " have I declar'd thy wondrous
 " Works: and now when I am old
 " and gray-headed, O God, forsake
 " me not." The Plea turns upon this,
 that now here was a greater Necessity
 of the Presence that us'd to own him.
 Indeed he could never do without his
 God, but when the Stock of Health
 and Youth was spent, his dependance
 must be only there. Now what is old
 Age to dying? for whenever this comes,

Eccles. xii. 3. *the Keepers of the House tremble, and
 the strong Men bow themselves; and to
 want the Joy of Salvation then, will
 make the Valley of the Shadow of Death
 darker than it is. For a Man to go he
 knows not where, and have no Assu-
 rance of a Guide that will lead him
 right,*

right, or a Support to bear him up; Serm. II.
to have nothing but an utter Gloom before him, and a corroding Anxiety within him, is a Misery that can only be outdone by that of Hell which it leads to: And tho it does not continue long, because the breaking of the Frame is over in a little time; yet it's what the Believer dreads and guards against. Dying is work enough of it self, we need not to have any more to do than *give up the Ghost*: and the Joy that God gives in to his People then, comes very seasonably.

If you consider no more of it than what others see; the Groans of a gasping Nature, Pain and Sickness, strong Convulsions that shake the whole Frame at once; I say, if there was no more than this, we cannot be too well laid in for it: but then besides that, there are Troubles of another sort. There may be *Fears within*, there is an Adversary that now is taking his last Pull at you; and who can bear up under such a double Weight, if there were not *Everlasting Arms* to support him? and these will do: *tho I walk thro the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no Evil, for thou art with me, thy Rod and thy Staff they comfort me.* This Joy is all that we have at such a time. The Troubles of Life may in a great many cases

Serm. II. cases be diverted: Company, Pleasures, the Hurry of Business have oftentimes cheated the Pain which they can-

Prov. xxxi.
6, 7.

not remove. Give strong Drink to him that is ready to perish, and Wine to those that be of heavy Hearts; let him drink and forget his Poverty, and remember his Misery no more. But these are Remedies that cannot be so well apply'd upon a Death-bed. The People with whom you have spent your merry Hours, will then stare upon you with Horrour in their Looks, and Tears in their Eyes: 'Tis too late to banter Death and Hell as they us'd to do: if they are so cruel as to give the jest, you are not stupid enough to receive it, when you lie sweating under a Fear of what you would never be-

Heb. ix. 27.

lieve, that it is appointed for all Men once to die, and after that the Judgment. At that time there's no drinking to forget our Sorrows, as *Waters that pass away.* Nature it self hath shut the Doors against every sensual Pleasure; and the Cares that us'd to be drown'd in Wine, now grow up into a Flood themselves. They roar and rowl over the Meditations; your Sin is then *ever before you.* Nay, the World that hath had your Hearts, and kept you from thinking on better things, lies dead round about you. The Estates and Honours that made you

you venture all in Eternity, which *Serm. II.*
 were always a *Vanity*, then come to
 be a *vexation of Spirit*. And your
 selves will take up the Question, when
 you can have nothing else but a mis-
 erable Answer, *What is a Man profited,* *Mark viii.*
if he should gain the whole World, and *36, 37.*
lose his own Soul; or what can a Man
give in exchange for his Soul?

This is the Business of dying; Friends
 are terrify'd, Pleasure fours, Con-
 versation is impossible: So then if you
 have not a Joy within, you have no-
 thing; for *Flesh and Heart will fail*
you: at that time all's gone but this,
 and if you are disappointed here, what
 will become of you hereafter? But
 the Christian hath his Reserve; he
 knows of something that will answer
 the emptiness of the Creation, *Thou*
art the Strength of my Heart, and my *Psal. lxxiii.*
Portion for ever. *26.*

2. This Joy is for the Instruction of
 others, both Enemies and Friends.
 Tho the Apostle knew his own Inte-
 rest in Death, when he said, *To die*
is gain; yet he was no more Selfish
 than he had been all his Life time.
 He desires to do the World as much
 good when he leaves it, as he did by
 continuing in it; and therefore would
 have his departure put into the best
 manner. This he calls his *earnest Ex-*
pectation and Desire, what he hop'd
 would

Serm. II. would be, what he wish'd might be, *that in nothing he should be ashamed: As if he thought it scandalous to die in*
 Phil. i. 23. *an useless way, But that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ might be magnify'd in his Body, whether it be by Life or by Death.* He was concern'd to have others learn something by his Fall, as every good Christian would. Now the Joy with which he finish'd his Course, may be an Instruction both to those that have *hated the Power of Godliness*, and to such as have *some good thing in them towards the Lord God of Israel.*

Perhaps they who objected against Holiness as a Fancy, and refus'd to have their Answer from a Pulpit, are to take it from a Death-bed. When they see a Person heaving for Breath, Life going out in a very expensive and sorrowful way, and yet stretching towards another World with Joy; this may tell them that they have been in an Error, that it is good to serve a Master who blesteth their last Minutes. 'Tis likely the World may turn you off when you can serve them no longer; and 'tis certain the Devil will. Many a Sinner lives to see himself in Contempt by those to whom he hath offer'd his Strength, and Time, and Soul as a Sacrifice. When you come to a Death-bed, Satan thinks it no longer

longer worth his while to tempt you, *Serm. II.*
or conceal the Danger you are in; he will then unfetter Conscience, and give it all its Liberty and Terror. To see a Wretch that hath liv'd in Pleasure die after such a way, as if Hell had got into Him before he had got into It, will tell us, that these are sadly us'd, and worse paid. But from those Examples that my Text refers to, we find there is a better Service: here's one that doth not cast us off in old Age, nor forsake us when Strength fails. There is so much difference between a Christian and an Infidel, as to the manner of their dying, as gives full Testimony to the distinction they had in the manner of their living. And tho a poor Wretch would think your Praying, your keeping the Lord's Day as *holy and honourable*, your reading and hearing the Word, were a great deal too much and a mere Whim; yet when he marks the *Perfect Man*, and beholds the *Upright*, that the end of this Man is Peace, 'tis an Evidence too plain to be denied, too solemn to be laugh'd at.

And then, it is for the Encouragement of those who have *set their Faces towards Zion*, they have had many a shivering Thought how God would deal with them at last: But when a Christian bids them farewel with so much

Serm. II. much Joy in himself, they will make the best of their way after him: "He had a great trial of his *Faith and Patience*, but he is gone thro a Course of both to inherit the Promises; and I will follow him: for *blessed are the dead that die in the Lord*. He is my God, I will prepare him an *Habitation*; he is my Father's God, and I will exalt him. He that hath dealt so well with them, shall have all my Confidence, for he will do so with me.

Rev. xiv. 14.

Exod. xv. 2.

Eccl. i. 5.

Psal. xlv.
15.

3. This Joy is a proper Entrance into Heaven. It assures us what we shall have there; nay, it is a Dawn of the Glory that *shines more and more unto a perfect Day*. We learn by it to discern the face of Things, and conclude in the Evening, it will be fair Weather because the Sky is clear. Our Souls are like the Sun in going down, which *hasteth to the place from whence he arose*, and only sets a while to shine again. This is call'd a more abundant entrance into the Kingdom of Christ; not only a safe Passage thither, but something magnificent: *With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought; they shall enter into the King's Palace*. God deals by several of his People, when they are going to the Heavenly Canaan, as he did by Moses at the border of the Earthly: He sets them as it were, on the top of Pisgah; he raiseth their

their Faith in its last Uses, and bids them *look East and West, and North and South; Behold, this is the Land that I will give thee*: only with a happy difference between the two Cases, That he was to see it with his Eyes, as an equivalent for going over: but they Look to make their passage easier, to give them more Courage upon their venturing thro; and after such a fight, they will hasten to *the goodly Mountain of Lebanon.*

III. There are particular Times in which God useth to give in a more than ordinary share of this Joy: Tho, as I hinted before, it is not necessary, and, I doubt not, many thousands of Christians get well to Heaven without it: They come surpriz'd into the City: They are *like them that dream*; one Moment they are bowing under their Fears and Darkness, and the very next it's all Day round about them. The distance is but small, between their doubting God's Love, and their praising it: Their fearing that the Lord had *forgotten to be gracious*, and their singing out, that *his Mercy endures for ever.* But some have their Passage easier.

I. Such as have been more than common Examples of Piety, who *feared the Lord above many*: Whose Justice

Serm. II. Justice and Mercy to the World,
 whose Devotion in their Families,
 whose Diligence to fill up their relation in Churches, were very remarkable. Really I should not be surpriz'd to see many Professors uneasy on a Death-bed, of whom I yet hope that they shall be *saved in the day of the Lord*, unless they change their Course: let Death come when it will, it takes them with their Hands and Hearts full of the World, and *the Cares of this Life*. For if the Practice of Religion is the lowest thing now, I can scarce think that the Joys of it will be the highest then. But when a Life is well filled up, God will distinguish it: When a Person hath been careful to mortify his Passions, hath grown in his Relish of Divine Things, and laid out himself for the publick Good, and *his last Works were more than his first*; such a one is likely to say what a blessed Saint told me when I took leave of him, "My Body is as full of Pain, and my Soul of Gladness, as either of them can bear."

2. God gives in a great share of this Joy, after the Doubts and Fears that a Christian hath liv'd under. Some People, thro an ill Habit of Body, a melancholy Constitution, or relative Troubles, go *Mourning all the day long*. Now it hath been observ'd in their Case,

Case, *At the Evening-tide there was* Sermon II.
Light. God came in to rescue his Name from the Contempt of Scor-
 ners; who would be ready to say,
 "This comes of being serious." But
 they who have all along fill'd the Ears
 of others with Complaints of them-
 selves, and were driven to and fro with
 every wind of Temptation, have gone
 over with a full Gale that hath blown
 them right into the Harbour.

3. In a time of Publick Danger. We
 seldom have those Exaltations of Joy
 that we meet with in the Case of the
 Martyrs: The Spirit of Grace displays
 it self more at a Scaffold, or a Stake,
 than it does upon a Death-bed. They
 that *love not their Lives to the Death,* Rev. xlii.
 must have their Affections full of
 something better: And this one thing
 is reason enough not to be afraid of
 Men. God may give you your Lives
 for a Prey; or if he does not, he can
 give you your Death for a Triumph.
 They that have gone before us thro
 these great Tribulations, had an easy and
 swift Passage; and so may we. He
 diverted Stephen from all the Pain and
 Scandal of dying, in that Way. That
 good Man must feel very little of
 the Stones, when he saw Heaven open,
 and Jesus sitting at the right Hand of
 God.



SERMON III.

ACTS xx. 24.

— That I might finish my
Course with Joy —

IV. **H**OW may a Person come into this way of Finishing his Course? We cannot but say, *Happy are the People that are in such a case.* Tho' the greatest part of Mankind will not endure to think of dying, yet when they can stay no longer, but must go, this is that sort of Passage they wish for. Thus did *Balaam*, his Heart was base enough, *loving the wages of Unrighteousness.* He could let out himself to a Tyrant, and be hired to curse *Israel*; yet he is like many thousand more, that will envy the very Persons upon a Death-bed, whom they have hated and laughed at. *Let me die the death*

2 Pet. ii. 15.

Num. xxiii.
10.

The CHRISTIAN'S JOY. 45

death of the Righteous, and let my latter End be like his. Sermon III.

Indeed it may turn to some account, if you begin to have these Wishes before it is too late. If at this time I speak to any whose Desires to die well are uppermost, I shall hope for a good Report of this day's Work. May we not suppose by the manner of the Phrase, that the Saint, whose Words I am now upon, thought there was something to be done in order to this Blessing? That tho it is a Gift of God, and he bestows it as a Sovereign, in what Degrees and Way he pleaseth, yet a great deal of our Religion is directed to it? This was always in his Mind. As in every City he had his *Afflictions and Bonds*, so he was still pursuing the Meditation, how he should wind up a Life and Ministry which had been so expensive to him. The manner of dying is what he cannot get out of his Head; and therefore his Behaviour now is in view of that. That I may then give a little Assistance to you in this useful Preparation, I would show you what is needful to a Person's *finishing his Course with Joy*. And that you may the better both receive and keep these Particulars, I will distribute them under two Heads.

1. Mention some things that are suppos'd, and without which a Person can have

Serm. III. have no thoughts of finishing his
 Course with Joy.

2. Inquire into those things that are of a more immediate Service in that very Hour.

[1.] When a Believer talks of *finishing his Course with Joy*, there's a great deal to be done before he comes to wind up all. You must not think that it is soon enough to begin to die, when you find your selves ceasing to live. You see here our Apostle is full of it in a time of Health; but if you *put it far from you as an evil day*, 'twill be hard, when it comes, to make it a good one. Several things are taken for granted; and if these are wanting, 'tis all a Dream to imagine there can be any Comfort in a dying Hour.

1. It is suppos'd that *an Atonement is made for the Soul*; that he goes off in the Character of a pardon'd Sinner, *justify'd freely by the Grace of God*, comprehended in the great Redemption. This is the Foundation of all. The Apostle had *suffer'd the loss of all things*, the Glories of his Education and Party; it was no longer a Privilege to him to have been *circumcised the eighth Day, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, of the Stock of Israel, of the Tribe of Benjamin, touching the Law a Pharisee: he counted all this but Loss*. And in that Renunciation, he has an Eye upon

Phil. iii. 5,
6, 7, 8, 9.

upon two Benefits which would make *Serm. III*
 it a good exchange for him : The first 
 was, *that he might win Christ*, be united to him here. But he cannot forbear looking on to that Hour, when he shall most want him. 'Tis not enough that he wins him, but he desires to be *found in him*. This is an Allusion either to the Nation of the *Jews*, when they kept within Doors in *Egypt*, at the time that the Angel went out and *kill'd the first-born*, where he did not see *the Blood of Sprinkling*; or to those Persons who fled to *the City of Refuge*, which was the only Condition of having their Lives. Now each of these cases tell us the Extremity that put the People upon such Methods. In *Egypt* they durst not stir out of their Houses, because of *the Destroyer*. Nor in the other Instance, would a Man venture out of his City, *lest the avenger of Blood should meet him*: his only security was, being in that Place. And thus solicitous was our Apostle; he knew of a time when the Enemy would disturb him, and *persecute his Soul*. Now when such a search is made for him, he desires to be found in Christ Jesus as his only Refuge, *having on the Righteousness that comes by Faith*.

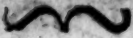
If

Serm.III.

Rom.iii. 25.

If he had not been set forth as a Propitiation for our Sins, there could be none of this Peace; because dying is an Arrest, it calls us up to a Judgment: we go into the other World to be tried. Our first Appearance there, is at the Bar of a God to whom our Nature hath been vile, and our Lives rebellious; and therefore if there was no acceptance in the Beloved, as all *Flesh hath sinned, so all must fall short of the Glory of God.* But it is suppos'd in our finishing with so much Joy, that we are *bought with a Price.* The dear Bargain hath been made; the Terms, the Rate of our Purchase is fairly laid down: and those words may be brought into this Case; As *Zeck. ix. 11.* *for thee, by the Blood of thy Covenant I have sent forth thy Prisoners out of the Pit wherein is no Water.* q. d. They have a long while been in a sort of Captivity, half scorch'd up in a weary World; but when they die, I send them forth to *Fountains of living Waters, and Streams from Lebanon;* and their Escape, their Dismission is all thro the *Blood of Thy Covenant:* There is still a regard to this. 'Tis suppos'd that we are in him, such as he hath redeemed.

And then besides, the Death of Christ doth not only give a Safety, but a Comfort to ours. There must be a Faith in

In his Blood, both for the Security Serm. III.
and the Pleasure of dying: We find 

each of these contain'd in his Design; his first rescue of us is from our Danger, his second, from our Fears: As we are told, *he took part of Flesh and Blood, that thro Death he might do* Heb. ii. 14.
these two things; Subdue him that had the Power of Death, that is, the Devil; and then, deliver them, who thro fear of Death, are all their Life-time subject to Bondage. So that if we beg for more than bare Safety in our remove; if we would have him sink all our Unbelief and Fear, 'tis within his Errand. We may look to Jesus for a peaceful Death, as well as a holy one.

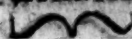
But what have they to do with this Heb. x. 29.
Peace, who count the Blood of the Covenant an unholy thing? whose Souls are under no weight of Sin, no need of Pardon? who hate Christ in his Person, despise him in his Offers, and will not come to him that they may have Life?

2. 'Tis also suppos'd that a Person is truly religious: One brought out of *Darkness into a marvellous Light.* Prov. xiv.
Righteous hath hope in his Death. Tis 32.
the Perfect and the Upright Man whose Psal. xxxvii.
End is Peace. Tho the great Security 37.

is founded upon what Christ hath done for him, yet there is always a part corresponding to this, and that is

D

what

Serm. III. what the Spirit hath done in him.  Justification and Sanctification have their different Offices. The Scripture hath taught us not to confound them, but Heaven and Earth cannot divide them. The Christian hopes thus to finish his Course, not only from a Protection, but a Principle. Alas! how should an unconverted Soul die with Joy? 'Tis a Folly to be pity'd in others, and laid down in our selves, that Men think to finish what (God knows) they never begun. What is the Course they are in, but Rebellion and Misery? And can they imagine to shut up that with Comfort, which they have maintain'd with Guilt? No,

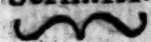
rom. vi. 23. no; *The end of these things is Death.* I am speaking *as a Barbarian* to those who live in a contempt of Religion, and have no care to be *holy and blameless*. These Discourses only let them see what they are like to lose. The Drunkard, the Swearer, *the covetous Man who is an Idolater*, the Malicious, the Ignorant, have nothing to do with all this: their dying is only a Passage from one Darkness, thro another, into a third, *A Land of Darkness as Darkness it self, and shadow of Death, without any Order, and where the Light is as Darkness.*

Job x. 22.

Tho it is not to be denied, the Case of a Sinner is never desperate, because

cause there are no Limits upon Al- Serm.III.
mighty Grace; yet we are to judg of things by the Appearance they now make. The Thief on the Cross died with Joy, as well as Safety: It gave him a Pleasure to think, he must be *that day with Christ in Paradise.* And Luke xxiii. 43.
doubtless the Spirit can *hasten his Work in Righteousness*, and put Conviction, Faith, and Assurance nearer together than he usually doth; but that is no Rule for us. They that live *without God in the World*, we may thus far say of them, that they have *no Hope.* And if there is not a thorough Change in their Natures before there is one in their State, they are undone for ever. When we talk of finishing a Course, 'tis suppos'd that we have begun it, that we are set out for Heaven. The Joy we hope to have at last, is one *Fruit of the Spirit*, Gal. v. 22.
by whom we are now *led as the Sons of God.* Rom. viii. 14.
The Apostle argues upon that surrender, that he had made of himself into the Hands of Christ: *I know in whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep what I have committed to him.* He does not give up his Soul when he can keep it no longer in his Body, that was a work done before: And so it must be if People would go off with a Joy that I am now describing.

Serm. III.



3. There must be a continuing in all the Duties of Religion: 'Tis not enough to begin well, but the very Sound of the Words tells us we are to hold on. Should we break off, 'tis a sort of *finishing*, but certainly there cannot be much Joy in that: *Be not weary of well doing, for in due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not.* And therefore whatever Zeal some People have once had, tho they set out with a fervency above the common sort; yet if they *draw back*, 'tis to *Perdition*; and of those God saith, *His Soul shall have no pleasure in them.* And how then can their Souls have any Pleasure in him? 'Tis a dreadful Article in the Judgment of an Apostate, that all the *Righteousness he hath done shall not be remembred, but in his Sin shall he die.* Their Prayers and Warmth, and the Caution that once they us'd, will pass for nothing: Tho, as it is suppos'd, *They have heard the Word, and anon with Joy receiv'd it, yet having no root in themselves, they endure but for a while.* This Joy of the Hypocrite is but for a Moment; his Hope is like giving up the Ghost, as if he was to have the Horrors of two dyings in one.

Nay, we may fear that these are more out of the way of Joy than others. An Apostate is a greater Enemy

to

to Religion than an Infidel; he strikes Serm.III.
a deeper Wound; his throwing it off
insinuates to the World, that he hath
tried the Ways of God, and doth not
like them. And do such as these think
to die with Joy? Tho sometimes they
have been affected in an Ordinance,
yet that Impression hath gone off;
and perhaps with a Contempt of what
they once lov'd; and the Sermons that
have done them no good in their Lives,
cannot be suppos'd to do them any at
their Death. When the Apostle had
spoke of them that *drew back*, he dis-
tinguisheth others from them by this
note, We are those that *believe to the*
saving of the Soul; we continue in a
Course of Faith, hold on believing
till the main Thing, the grand Ar-
ticle of Happiness comes; *The end of*
our Faith is the Salvation of our
Souls. 1 Pet. i. 9.

4. A Life of Integrity is a Prepara-
tion for the Joys of a Death-bed, that
the Scripture hath laid a more than
ordinary weight upon. I know this
is comprehended in the former Head,
but I could not forbear being particu-
lar, when the Spirit of God had been
so. When People have liv'd *without*
Disimulation, 'tis what will sit light
in a dying Hour. *If any Man goes be-*
yond, or defrauds his Brother in any
matter, the Lord is the Avenger of all
such. 1 Thess. iv. 6.

Serm. III. *such.* 'Tis observ'd, that the Fruit of Righteousness is sown in Peace of them that make Peace; and that is one Argument why we should put away lying, and speak the Truth every Man to his Neighbour: Why we must be angry and sin not, lest the Sun should go down upon our Wrath: As if your Spirit ought to be very cool at the close of the Day. But is it not of more Importance, when the Sun of Life goes down, that it does not set upon any Wrath or Hypocrisy in you? Those little Arts and Shufflings that some Persons admit into their Behaviour, will make sad work for Conscience another Day. They may think, if they can but set their Actions in a good light to others, 'tis well enough; but they'll find it the hardest to make such Accounts pass with themselves. Now the Apostle tells us, that the Openness of his Carriage gave him very easy Reflections in that Hour. When he writes to Timothy, that the time of his Departure was at hand; says he, *I have fought a good Fight.* And that he could not say unless he had fought fairly; for he lays it down as a Rule in Religion, as well as those Games, out of which he fetch'd the Comparison, That if a Man strives for the Mastery, yet is he not crown'd, except he strives lawfully. This supposeth that he

Ephes. iv.
25, 26.

2 Tim. iv.
6, 7.

he had done nothing against the Laws *Serm. III*
of War. *I have kept the Faith*, kept
it pure as a Minister, kept it whole
as a Christian: I would dare to preach
no other Doctrine, or live by any
other Principle. These two he speaks
of, as comprehending his whole Cha-
racter both private and publick, *Not*
walking in Craftiness, nor handling the *2 Cor. iv. 2*
Word of the Lord deceitfully. And ha-
ving liv'd without Fraud, he's pre-
par'd to die without Fear.

But there is another Passage which
shows us how easy it made him when
he had Death in view, that all his
Actions to Men, and especially to the
Churches of Christ, had been fair and
undisguis'd. When they were in *Asia*,
tho it pleas'd God to recover them, yet
for a time they were *press'd above* *2 Cor. i. 8,*
measure, beyond strength, insomuch that *9.*
they despair'd even of Life, and had the
Sentence of Death in themselves. And
what was it that bore him up then?

Our rejoicing is this, the Testimony of *Ver. 12.*
our Conscience, that in Simplicity and
godly Sincerity, not with fleshly Wis-
dom, but by the Grace of God, we have
had our Conversation in the World, and
more abundantly to you-wards. Such
Persons as go by this Rule, *Peace will* *Gal. vi. 16*
be on them, and on the Israel of God.
They may be pursu'd as Sinners by
some, and deserted as Imprudent by

Serm. III. others; but all is well that ends well:
 “ May it be my Choice rather to die
 “ easy than to live so. I would sooner
 “ venture upon the Challenges of all
 “ the World than those of my own
 “ Conscience.”

Job xxvii.
 5, 6.

He that can say, *till I die I will not remove my Integrity from me, my Righteousness will I hold fast, and not let it go; may hope that his Heart will not reproach him as long as he liveth. And if so, it signifies very little, who besides does reproach him: For, Beloved, if our Hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.*

1 Joh. iii. 21.

5. I must not omit one Branch of Religion which the Scripture hath laid out so much in my View, and that is a Life of Mercy to others. A Readiness to do good, and especially to the Household of Faith, is what usually God hath own'd with Joy in a dying Hour. Those Descriptions that we have of a Good Man in the thirty seventh Psalm, run very much upon this, that he is ever merciful and lendeth, and his Seed is blessed. The little that he hath is better than great Revenues of many Wicked; better for himself, and better to others; he hath it more with a Blessing. This runs thro his whole Character, he is doing good in a gentle and diffusive Way; and the account we have of such a one, is, *Mark the perfect Man,*

*Man, and behold the Upright, for the Serm.III.
End of that Man is Peace.*

God takes particular notice of what we do for his People; Christ hath made this the Hinge of a future Judgment.

*I was a hungry and ye gave me no Meat, Mat. xxv.
thirsty and ye gave me no Drink, Sick 41, 42, 45.
and in Prison and ye visited me not;
and inasmuch as ye did it not to the least
of these my Brethren, ye did it not to me.*

Doubtless there will be an Enquiry after those Acts of Obedience that are more spiritual and secret; our Faith in his Promises; our Love to his Statutes, the Prayers we have pour'd in his Ear: but he is pleas'd to put it upon the other Head, that we may be convinc'd Religion is a thing to make us useful.

It does not lie all in your Closets; if it goes no further than Contemplation, and what we mean by a devout Life, 'tis a sort of *living to your selves*: and in such a sense you may be call'd, as

Israel was, an empty Vine, not for Hos. x. 1.
bringing forth no Fruit at all, but do-

ing it to your selves. In the little Observation that hath come within my reach, I have found those have had their last Hours darker than others who have been retir'd, and have run out into the Severities of Godliness, personal Mortifications, with too great a Neglect of the Publick. We must *charge the Rich in this World to be rich*

Serm. III. *rich in good Works*: 'tis not only making their Lives useful, but their Death comfortable; for thus they lay up in store for themselves a good Foundation against the time to come, laying hold on Eternal Life.

1 Tim. vi.
18, 19.

6. 'Tis suppos'd, in order to our dying with Joy, that we grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, that the Work of God hath improv'd in us. This is more than barely continuing in the Ways of Truth, 'tis an *abounding in the Work of the Lord*. If you would have Faith do its Office well at last, you must endeavour that every Ordinance make you better now: And because this hath so great a share in the Blessing for which I name it, allow me to tell you what you ought to mean by it. You are not to take the advance of your Graces by the Strength and Vigour of your Affections. These are floating uncertain things, and very often depend upon the Body. Our Love to God is of the same nature with that to Man; 'tis an inward Principle, and as truly lives when it does not run out into Transports, as when it does. Our Carriage to a Friend at parting or at meeting may be different from what it is in ordinary Conversation; but the Love we have for him is the same. I mention this for the relief

2 Cor. xv. ult

lief of those who fear that the Work Serm.III.
of God in their Hearts is not what it
us'd to be, because their natural Pas-
sions are not so strongly touch'd under
an Ordinance; but growing in Grace
is another thing.

Examine whether you have greater
Command over your selves. Are you
less proud and peevish? not so soon
swelled or ruffled? Hath the World
no more of your Hearts and Time?
Do you keep closer to Duty than ever?
Are you determin'd to break thro all
Opposition to meet with your God?
And is your Dependance upon Christ
more intimate and humble? If these
are Questions that Conscience can an-
swer with any Peace, 'tis well. To
finish a Course supposeth that you are
not only set out with a Principle, but
that it riseth into new Degrees: *Add*
to your Faith Vertue, and Knowledge, 2 Pet. i. 5, 6,
and Temperance, and Patience, and Bro- 7, 11.
therly Kindness, and Charity; let these
help one another, and so an abundant
Entrance shall be administer'd to you in-
to the Kingdom of your Lord.

7. 'Tis suppos'd that a Man hath
liv'd with frequent Meditations of
Death and Heaven, that he hath often-
times resign'd himself to one as a Ne-
cessity, and breath'd after the other as
a Happiness. The Apostle tells the
Corinthians that he *died daily*; it was 1 Cor. xv. 31.

Serm. III. no new thing to him: and certainly a
 ~~~~~ Good Man is out of the way of his  
 Duty as well as Peace, who does not  
 put himself in mind of the Place he is  
 going into. 'Tis all wrong that Death  
 should be a Surprize to any of us: We  
 keep a round of Obedience, hear so  
 many Sermons in a Week, make Con-  
 science of the Divine Worship in our  
 Closets and Families, which is all very  
 well. But do not we know, and should  
 not we often think, that there will be  
 Ecclef. viii. an end of this? They that *come and go*  
 10. *from the Place of the Holy, must be bury'd*  
*and forgotten in the City wherethey have*  
*so done.*

'Tis the best way of doing any Du-  
 ty, to mingle it with frequent Thoughts  
 of Heaven. As all the Conversation  
 we have with God now, can do no  
 more than introduce the great Com-  
 munion of a better World; so it  
 should be turn'd this way. When  
 we are in private, where it is no In-  
 terruption to be severe over our selves,  
 'tis easy to fill that Work with such  
 happy Excursions as these: " O my  
 " Soul, thou art a mourning over the  
 " Remains of a Wicked Nature, beg-  
 " ging Grace against Temptations,  
 " telling thy Fears of falling short:  
 " But shall Religion be always thus?  
 " Art thou never to approach thy  
 " God, but with *the Voice, of a Dove?*  
 " Must

"Must I be an Eternal Minor? No, *Serm. III.*

"Heaven knows nothing of this Lan-

"guage." Or, if you are rais'd to a Divine and Holy Pleasure from *the good Hope* that is in you, yet this must lead you up to the Place where those Joys shall be full.

When you are in the Publick Assembly, all the Entertainment there is with a reference to *the Church of the First-born*. You are now pleas'd to see the Faces of your Brethren, who are met upon so good an Occasion: You enter into God's Presence with Thanks-*Psal. cii. 1.* giving, and make a joyful Noise to him with Psalms. But what is this to the Meeting of the next World? You are here affected with the Doctrines of Christianity, *The manifold Wisdom of God, the unsearchable Riches of Christ*: But there the Mystery will be laid more open, and your Ministers and your selves no longer complain that *we know but in Part*. The Scheme of Salvation that looks so well now, is to be shown in another Figure then; for *with thee is the Fountain of Life, and in thy Light shall we see Light.* *Psal. xxxvi.* Death will be easy to a Person whose whole Carriage leads him to think of it. The Believer may say, "Tho I am call'd away a little sooner than I imagin'd, yet 'tis the very road I was lately looking over, it hath not been long out of my Thoughts." S E R.




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## S E R M O N IV.

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ACTS xx. 24.

—That I might finish my  
Course with Joy.—

[2.] **T**H E R E are other things whose Influence upon this Joy is more immediate, that come into the very Work of Dying, and make it so easy to the Christian. I do not pretend to give you all of them; for as it is a Case that none of us ever yet try'd, so it cannot be suppos'd that God hath reveal'd every thing that he will do in a Concern that can happen no oftner than once. What the Scripture hath laid out most in my View, are such Heads as these.

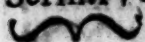
1. If there is any Joy in finishing this Course, we must put it upon the fresh Testimony that the Holy Spirit gives



## The CHRISTIAN'S JOY. 63

gives in to the Work of Grace. He is *Serm. IV.*  
call'd *the Comforter*; and the Name *Joh. xiv.*  
tells us what way his Office lies, what  
Believers may expect from him; and  
there cannot be a fitter *Time of Love*,  
than a dying Hour. If ever he will  
be a *present Help*, we shall wish it then  
when we have nothing else, but all  
Nature without us is dead, and all  
within us is going to be so too. Then  
it is seasonable for him to shine in up-  
on his own Work, and let us know  
that before we die once, we have been  
born twice, that this second Birth is  
a Preservative from all *the Power of a Rev. xx. 6.*  
*second Death*. His Consolations are  
always dear. *Joy in the Holy Ghost*  
cannot come wrong; but if there is  
any moment that makes it more need-  
ful than ever, 'tis at the Close of all.  
We have sometimes been disappointed  
in our Hopes of it. God hath not  
swell'd Assurance so high as we ima-  
gin'd he would do, under a Sermon  
or at the Lord's Table; we have come  
away from each of these, staggering  
under our Fears, no more satisfy'd a-  
bout the State of our Souls. These  
things we have often struggled with,  
but who can endure the Thoughts of  
being balk'd at last, of having the  
Spirit silent, when there is but one  
more Cry that we can send to him?  
If ever he will be a Comforter, that's  
the time. Nor

Serm. IV.



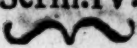
Nor does the Believer look in vain for his Appearance in a dying Hour. This seems to take up a great Share in his Commission. He's to put *Everlasting Arms* under the Christian in many Troubles; But there is something in the Scheme and Design that he goes by, that looks full upon our great Change, as if he would not leave us Then. The Persons to whom he hath been sparing in the Distribution of his Comfort, have had Joy enough to die with; as I once hinted from those words, *It shall come to pass in that day that the Light shall not be clear, nor dark, a sort of Mixture or Neutrality between Assurance and Despair; but it shall be one day which shall be known unto the Lord, not day nor night.* Now after it hath continu'd so for some time, the Case here is, that it will clear up at last; *It shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light.* 'Tis observ'd in the general, that the Spirit witnesseth with our Spirits that we are the Children of God; he draws out his Argument upon the Conscience, writes it in fair and legible Characters there: but in giving in this Testimony we are consider'd as Passengers, not only to know the Relation, but to conclude upon it. *If Children, then Heirs*; that supposeth something to come: *Heirs of God*, as deserving a Title

Zech. xiv.  
6, 7.

Rom. viii.  
16.

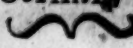
Title from him, as having a Portion Serm. IV.  
in him: *Joint Heirs with Christ*; we have our Claim thro his Merit, we must have a Possession in his Company: *if so be we suffer with him, we shall also* Ver. 17.  
*be glorify'd together.* So that you see what a length he goes in the Discovery, he does not only show the Principles we have receiv'd, but helps us in the Deduction.

Now if this is the Nature of that Witness that the Spirit gives us within our selves; if it does not only show us what is past, that *we are Children*, but what to come upon our being so, when can we know this better than in the moment of going off? Tho it is always kind in him to tell us we are Heirs of a Kingdom, yet the nearer we come to the Place, the surer we should be of the thing: and if it is comprehended within his Bounty, to say that we shall be glorify'd with Christ, we may hope he will speak it out in that hour when we are drawing the Curtains upon Nature, and taking our last leave of a World below. If he tells us so then, it is indeed *a Word in Season*; and what may well be mention'd in this Case, under the Wiseman's Comparison, *it's like Apples of Gold in Pictures of Silver*. Here are Pictures of Silver; the Christian's whole Frame is rich and costly, but a Consolation

Serm. IV. solation so well tim'd as on a Death-bed,  
 is like a golden Apple set in it, something more precious than all the rest.

You must understand the Share that the Spirit of God hath in your Satisfaction; there is a Duty for you in order to this Joy: but still if you have it, remember it is a Divine Creation; do not account it the produce of your own Industry, but a Gift from above. You have each of these in that one Passage; the Apostle adviseth to give  
 2 Pet. i. 10, *Diligence to make your Calling and Election sure: And he adds, For if you do these things, you shall never fail.* But to ward off the Vanity that would make you suppose this comes from your selves, he useth another Phrase; *For so an Entrance shall be ministred unto you abundantly, into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* Tho you do enter in this abundant Way with Joy and Triumph, and tho your Diligence is in order to it, yet it is here consider'd as a thing ministred unto you: That very Spirit who struck you first into Terror, who begun his Work with Conviction, will end it with Assurance. Thus runs the Blessing, *The God of Hope fill you with all Joy and Peace in believing, that you may abound in Hope, thro the Power of the Holy Ghost.* This was a great Article in his Commission, to give in  
 Rom. xv. 13. that



that sort of Light that is most proper Serm. IV.  
 for a good Man to die with. You see   
 how our Lord advanceth to this in the  
 Promise he gave his Disciples; *Howbeit,*  
*when the Spirit of Truth is come, he* John xvi.  
*will guid. you into all Truth: for he* 13, 14, 15.  
*shall not speak of himself; but what he*  
*shall hear, that shall he speak.* This  
 may refer to the common helps that  
 he gave them, *And he will show you*  
*things to come.* 'Tis too low to under-  
 stand this of the Gift of Prophecy, it  
 is rather meant of those Futurities  
 that make up their Happiness: *He*  
*shall glorify me; for he shall receive of*  
*mine, and show it unto you. All things*  
*that the Father hath, are mine: therefore*  
*said I, He shall take of mine, and show*  
*it unto you.* And when is it most pro-  
 per for him to tell us what sort of a  
 Person Christ is, and what a Fulness  
 he lives with Above, but when our  
 Souls are untying and getting at liberty  
 to go thither? In this Case methinks  
 our dear Redeemer employs the Holy  
 Spirit in such an Office as *Joseph* did  
 his Brethren, *Ye shall tell my Father of*  
*all my Glory in the Land of Egypt:* He  
 could have sent them away with that  
 Message before, but he defer'd it; and  
 so does Christ. We are not to know  
 the best of his Glory till we are in the  
 same Case with good old *Jacob*; not  
 only to have the Report of what *Jo-*  
*seph*

Serm. IV. *Joseph was in Egypt, but see the very Waggon at the Door that will carry himself thither.*

2. There must be some new apprehension of the Happiness we are going to. Under the other Head I shew'd you who is the Author of this Joy; I am now leading you into the Materials. The Spirit having told you what you are, *the Children of God*, helps you to argue what you shall be, *Joint Heirs with Christ; Ever with the Lord*. And at the same time that you come to know the thing, he enlargeth your Souls into a Value for it; you do not only see your way clear to Heaven, but that your Joys will be full in it. And we may suppose these apprehensions will be stronger than we could bear them now. It may be this Opinion runs thro every Duty and Danger, that *they are blessed who are call'd to the Marriage-Supper of the Lamb*. The Christian is suppos'd to have a prevailing Esteem of Heaven before he comes to die. That appears by his Self-Denial, his living like a *Pilgrim and Stranger upon Earth*. For they that say such things, declare plainly they seek a Country: Not any here, but one above. For this he extends a Care into all the parts of Religion; *Labouring, that whether present with the Lord, or absent from him, he may be accepted of him.*

1 Theff. iv.  
17.

Heb. xi. 14,  
16.

2 Cor. v. 9.

him. For this he denies himself of Serm. IV.  
the Preferments that others will have  
at the Price of their Souls: For this he  
lives above the Impressions of Danger,  
and Fears not the Wrath of Kings; be-  
cause he hath respect to the Recompence Heb. xi. 26.  
of Reward. These are no new things  
to the Believer, all along in this Ta-  
bernacle he knows of a House not made 2 Cor. v. 1.  
with Hands, eternal in the Heavens.  
But these Convictions are stronger  
when he comes to die, than he needs  
to have them now; they would do  
him a great deal of harm in Life, but  
then he is in no danger by them. We  
cannot think the Apostle Paul liv'd  
without Assurance; he speaks, and  
writes like one who was as much at a  
certainty about his own State, as any  
Man could be, tho there was a mixture  
of Fear in his Case. I keep under my 1 Cor. ix.  
Body, lest by any means after I have 27.  
preach'd to others, I my self should be a  
Cast-away. But the matter seems to be  
clearer with him when he had the Pro-  
spect of Suffering; he tells it with a  
greater Air, I know in whom I have be- 2 Tim. i. 12.  
lieved, and am persuaded that he is able  
to keep what I have committed to him  
against that Day. And so at the end  
of the Epistle he brings in the words  
I have formerly given you: I am  
ready to be offer'd up, the time of my Ch. iv. 6, 7,  
departure is at hand. I have fought a 8.  
good

Serm. IV. *good Fight, I have finish'd my Course, I have kept the Faith: Henceforth is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness.* It was laid up for him a long while before this, but he dates a new Assurance from the Prospect he had of dying.

'Tis no way unaccountable to suppose, that if some of God's People had as great a view of Heaven at this distance, as they will have when they are within a few Moments of getting thither, it would unhinge them for Duty; give them an impatience of Life, make them useless in the World where God hath set them; and instead of minding what they should Do, their Thoughts would be swallow'd up with what they should Have. We may almost venture to say, that being *caught into the third Heaven*, had like to have spoil'd an Apostle; a *Thorn in the Flesh* was really more useful to him than a View of *Paradise*. The one would have *exalted him above measure*, it left him in the dark whether he *was in the Body* or no; the other convinc'd him that he was, and that he was *there* in a Course of Duty. But all this wrong influence that such a Pleasure might have given us, will be over when we come to a Death-bed: 'Twill do us no harm then to have a broad Look in at the Door of our Father's House, if it makes us long and heave to be gone at that

2 Cor. xii.  
7.



that time, we should do so. When Serm. IV.  
 Christ, by the Language of his Spirit, and Providence too, saith, *Behold I come quickly*; 'tis a Pleasure, 'tis a Duty for us to answer, *Amen, even so come Lord Jesus*. We have done with the World then; our Families, our Church, and the Nation are to have no more from us. This Joy cuts off no Service to them, nor can it be improper to have full Desires of leaving them. And this will make us finish our Course in a happy way, to see Heaven open, and what a goodly City we are going to.

Rev. xxii.  
20.

3. The assurance of our being deliver'd from a Body of Sin and Death, will make a part of that Joy that a good Man dies with. Tho a Christian may have *hope, thro Grace*, that his Guilt is done away; yet a last Illness usually gives these two Impressions more force than they had before.

*First*, The Misery that Sin hath brought upon him in this World;

and

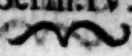
*Secondly*, The Unfitness that he hath by it for another.

The former is plain enough. He never felt so much Pain and Sorrow, never was Life so great a load; and the latter is very frequent: He complains that it is harder now than ever to go the length of a Duty; he hath less command

Serm. IV. command of his Thoughts, and less vigour in his Affections. Now this is owing to several Causes. Why should a Christian upon a Death-bed, when he is in a long and pining Sicknes, complain more of distraction than he us'd to do? I answer,

First, What he saith is a great deal of it true; there is more to call away his Mind than there us'd to be. Thro the Grace of God, sometimes when he hath gone into his Clofet, he could leave the World behind him; the Doors have been shut against those Amusements: but Pain and Sicknes are things that lie nearer, there's no shaking them off. And besides, his Worship now is a thing that comes by snatches, he must not be so much alone at once: The attendance that Friends and Relations give him, will be an interruption. But yet,

Secondly, There's a great deal of mistake in this Complaint: And tho the Believer meets with new Distractions, yet he makes them worse than they are; and perhaps the uneasiness doth not rise so much from his Soul's being out of Frame, as the great Awe he is now under, to have it in Frame: a dull and dead Worship is what he could once have been easy with; a Formality God knows runs thro us all: And tho it's dreadful, yet it is very true,

true, that we carry on Duties without *Serm. IV.*  
a Zeal, and leave them without a   
Groan; a sense of our Coldness is soon  
worn off: But when a Man comes to  
die, such a disorder as this is not to be  
endur'd. He challenges himself in ano-  
ther manner than he us'd to do.  
“ What, O my Soul, hast thou so lit-  
“ tle Attention in his Worship, who  
“ a few Moments hence will have thee  
“ at his Bar? 'Tis true, this hath  
“ been thy way too often, to go tri-  
“ fling thro an Ordinance, but now  
“ *the Judg is at the Door.*” And then,  
Thirdly, I believe God suffers the  
sense of these Disorders to be so uneasy  
upon the Mind of a good Man, to  
make way for the Joy that he will have  
in parting with them. When he is  
rouling upon a Sick-bed, full of Pain  
from the Distemper, griev'd at the  
fluttering of his Thoughts and a gene-  
ral Disorder of his Soul, he cannot  
but cry out, “ *O wretched Man that I* *Rom. vii.*  
“ *am! who shall deliver me from this body* *24.*  
“ *of Death,* that gives me so much  
“ Trouble. 'Tis a Death that kills  
“ my Religion, it will not let me  
“ worship as I would do; *Thanks be*  
“ *to God who gives me the Victory,*  
“ *thro Jesus Christ;* and blessed be that  
“ Hour when this Victory comes.”  
This Joy supposeth dying to be our  
choice, and that ariseth from an appre-  

# E

# hension

Serm. IV. *hension of some benefit by it. If it is not a Change for the better, we cannot come into it with all this Pleasure. Now to set home such a Conviction as this, God doth not only let us see a little of that beauteous Country before us, but he makes us feel something very bad within us. We*  
*2 Cor. v. 2. that are in this Tabernacle do groan, being burden'd. "The Pain and Sickness that keep my Body in a Tor-*  
*"ture, and especially the Vanity, the*  
*"Indifference, the Unbelief that are*  
*"the Distempers of my Soul, make*  
*"me weary of being here; I hate*  
*"it, I would not live always."*

*I have sometimes told you, no Misery of Nature, no Imperfection of Grace, should make you discontented with*  
*Heb. xi. 36. Life. You have need of Patience, that*  
*after you have done the Will of God ye*  
*Job xiv. 14. may inherit the Promise. All the days*  
*of your appointed time you are to wait*  
*till your Change comes. Yet it is with-*  
*in the compass of Duty to ballance Li-*  
*ving with Dying; to consider often,*  
*how much you want in the one, that*  
*you will certainly have by the other.*  
*"Lord, let me endure Pain and Sor-*  
*"row in what degree thou plearest;*  
*"confine me to the narrowness of*  
*"Religion here, to serve thee after*  
*"such a dull manner as I do now;*  
*"I leave it to thee how long it is to*  
*"be*



“ be thus with me: but yet it will *Serm. IV.*

“ be a good Day to my Soul, when it

“ shall be so no more.” ’Tis no small

Article in dying, for the holy Spirit

to tell us, “ O Christian, now comes

“ the last Effort of thy Unbelief,

“ there’s but one Attempt it hath up-

“ on thee more, and then thou hast

“ done with it for ever: Satan hath

“ but a single Arrow to discharge at

“ thee, and thou’lt be out of his reach.

“ And as for this poor sickly Body,

“ thou art within a very little while

“ of thy last Groan; thy Pains come

“ often, dying comes but once, and

“ puts an end to that Retinue that

“ led it on: Have patience but one

“ moment, and thou wilt find thy self

“ slip’d thro the Darknes and Ago-

“ nies of a Sick-bed, and got into a

“ place where there is no Death, nor *Rev. xxi,*

“ Sorrow, nor Pain; but all Tears will *4. 5.*

“ be wip’d away from thine Eyes. And

“ he that sitteth upon the Throne will

“ make all things new.

God speaks to us, as *Moses* did to the

*Jews* on the other side of the *Red-Sea*;

they were enclos’d with Danger; to

go on was the way to be drown’d in

Water, to stand still gave them no

Prospect but of swimming in Blood: But

he tells them not only, that here was

a way thro for themselves, but that the

*Egyptians* who were now behind them,

Serm. IV. they should see no more for ever. And it is thus with the Believer: The Enemy, that seem'd like *Pharaoh* to let him go, now musters up all his force when he thinks *the Wilderネス hath shut him in*. As long as he stays here, Satan and a wicked Nature put him in fear; and yet the Passage is so dark and awful, that he knows not how to venture a Step forwards. But he that opens the Waters to let you go safe till you are got over, hath taken care that no Enemy shall follow you; Death is the parting place between you and your Sins, between you and your Pains. And how comfortable must it be to the Christian to think, that now *his Warfare is accomplish'd*, that tho' the Enemy hath rallied after former Victories, yet now he is going to *make a full end*. A good Man's Faith hath much such a Lot as *Samson* had, it lives all along in an Enemies Country; and tho' it usually conquers, yet it may be plagu'd and entangl'd, and sometimes taken captive: But with what a Joy will it do the last Offices of the War, when it *lays hold on the two Pillars* that keep up the whole Frame of Nature? With what a Zeal and Force will it send out that Petition, *Now Lord, strengthen me but this once, that I may be avenged on them? After this it bows with all its might*, and so dies in a glorious Ruin.

4. When a good Man finishes his Serm.IV.  
Course with Joy, his Mind is unen-  
cumber'd with the World. Those  
Persons who have Concerns of Value,  
and which may occasion a great deal of  
Trouble if not settled, should not de-  
lay it: *Set thine House in order, for thou shalt die, and not live.* For as the sud-  
denness of Death may hinder you from  
doing the thing at all, so at best in  
a slow Distemper, Settlements and  
Schemes, and Provisions for Posterity,  
are but an interruption to what is then  
your main Work: there's hurry enough  
in dying, and you have no need to  
croud it more than it is. I would  
therefore advise you now in Health, to  
put your Designs into that order, that  
your Souls may sit loose from every  
Care of this nature. And yet I cannot  
but observe, how remarkably God hath  
rais'd some of his People above those  
Anxieties on a Death-bed, that have per-  
haps made them *all their Life-time sub-  
ject to Bondage.*

*I knew a Man in Christ about four-  
teen Years ago, who because of his nu-  
merous Family, and the little prospect  
there was of subsistence for them, was  
often troubled with uneasy Thoughts  
what would become of them. It plea-  
sed God to take him away by a lin-  
gling and painful Distemper: and af-  
ter he had been twelve Weeks in that*

**Serm. IV.** desperate Condition, I ask'd him, Whether he was under any Trouble about those he left behind him: And tho I never saw a greater Example of Affection, both as a Husband and as a Father, yet the Answer he gave me was, That truly it never so much as once came into his Thoughts till I led him to it with that Question. And it was so far from giving him the Pain that it had done, that as a near Relation told me, he was not only satisfy'd God *could* be gracious to them, but assur'd, that he *would* be so. Happy are they whose Souls have thus left the World before their Bodies do, there's no anxiety hanging as a dead Weight upon them!

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SER-



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 SERMON V.
 

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ACTS xx. 24.

— That I might finish my  
Course with Joy —

5. **A**NOTHER thing that brings the Mind of a good Man to such a Calmness in Dying, is a Conquest over all his relative Troubles. His Thoughts are then full of a Place, and a Name *Isa. lvi. 5.* better than that of Sons and of Daughters. The Reflections that us'd to be a Heart-breaking, begin to lose their Sting. He is so swallow'd up with the Value of a Happiness that is flowing in to himself, that it brings his Wishes into a narrower Compass: He is ready to say as *Mephibosheth*, *What right have I to cry any more unto the King?* This was the Case of *David*, he could not live without uneasy Thoughts about a

Serm. V. Family dip'd in Blood and Folly : To see one Son kill'd in a private Quarrel, and another in a publick ; to observe how the Ambition of *Adonijah* prompted him against the plain Decree of Heaven, this makes the good Man go mourning till he comes very near the Grave ; but that Pain wears out before he leaves the World : And altho his House was not so with God ; yet he had made with him a new and everlasting Covenant, that's order'd in all things, and sure : and this is all his Salvation, and all his Desire, altho he does not make the other to grow. The Glories of this Covenant were things contain'd in the Doctrine of his Religion ; he must have understood thus much long before : But they never had that weight to bear down his Sorrow for the Confusion of a Family, as when the Days drew near that he must die.

2 Sam. xxiii.  
5.

Jer. xxxi.  
15.

I need not tell you how a few of these Crosses mingled in the Life of a Believer, shall make it bitter enough, and take away the Relish he ought to have of other things. Rachel refus'd to be comforted for her Children, because they were not. And there are sorer Afflictions than putting them into the Dust ; When their Feet go down to Death, and their Steps take hold on Hell. A foolish Son shames his Father, and is bitterness to her that bare him. When a Man

Man hath full hopes that it shall be well with himself, and it may be seeth some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel in several of his Posterity; yet he can't spare one out of the number; and the melancholy part of his daily Prayer is, *Oh that Ishmael may live in thy sight!* He cannot yet bear the thoughts, that Eternity should divide those whom Time hath united; that they who are of *one Blood* should be distributed into two States, that such who have been the dearest on Earth, should never meet in Heaven.

I would be a Digression for me to enter into the Causes of that Affair, which is both so dismal and so frequent, that good People should have bad Children. I might show you how a righteous God lets it be so, to bring *Iniquity to remembrance*: That tho their neglect of him in the main turn of Life, is not punish'd with a casting-out of themselves, yet they see the Marks of a slow Resentment in those that come after them.

'Tis thus that he reminds them of the Education they ought to have given their Children, whilst they were Young; but, as I said, these are things out of my way. I would only observe to you, that they make bitter Work in old Age, and bring gray Hairs with Sorrow to the Grave.

Serm. V.



Now that this may not hinder the Pleasure of dying, God raiseth his People above the Affections they us'd to suffer by. Remember, Sinners, they who liv'd with you, pray'd for you, and griev'd over you, shall go off with a happy Unconcern what becomes of those who would take no Warning. When they get into another World, all relative Passions are extinct; they can love nothing but Christ and his Image there, and shall have as much satisfaction in the Glories of Justice on their Posterity, as any other of an impenitent Race. *The rich Man* in Hell, call'd *Abraham Father*. Nor was the Claim of Kindred without a foundation; for he in his Answer calls him Son: But *the Gulph between them* set him out of the reach of Pity from the Saints, as well as Mercy from God: And that Patriarch from whom he was lineally descended, will not so much as allow him *a drop of Water to cool his Tongue*.

Luke xvi.

Psal. xvii.  
14, 15.

And something of this Temper is bestow'd upon a good Man when he begins to die, to make his Passage the easier; as *David* insinuates, That they who had *their Portion in this Life were full of Children, and left the rest of their Substance to their Babes*: This they take up with; nor was he above the desire of such a Blessing: but it is something that lay nearer himself that he made his



his Choice; *As for me I will behold thy Face in Righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy Likeness.* 

Do not fret your selves with an Opinion, that they who have imbitter'd your Lives, will clog your Death; their Carriage may indeed be said to break your Hearts now, but a Saviour, who hath provided a Chariot to fetch you up, will suffer none of these Cares to hang upon the Wheels: No, no, it will run smooth enough; you'll not find your selves at leisure then to mind any other Relation than *the Father of Spirits*, and him that is to be *the First-born among many Brethren*: When the time is so short that you see *the Fashion of this World passing away*, these things 1 Cor. vii. 30, 31.

will be *as tho they were not*. I have heard a Story to this purpose, of a Lady, whose ungodly Son had been an Expence to her more ways than one: and when his Wickedness had press'd her Mind and Health so long, that there was no prospect of any thing but Death; she told him, Tho he had cost her many a Tear, and all in vain, yet now she was a going to a Place, where, if she did not meet him, she must for ever rejoice in the Justice of God against him. And really so it will be, 'tis in vain to run into another World with the Noise of that Argument, *We have Abraham to our Father*; that signifies

Serm. V.

Isa. lxiii,  
16.

nifies nothing: For as God himself can over-rule the Plea, so we shall find no Relation that will own it. *Abraham is ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledgeth us not.*

I wish that poor heedless Sinners would consider this, that in a small time their excellent Parents will be as little impress'd with their danger as they are now themselves: And tho it is a Comfort that carries an awful Sound, yet I cannot omit it, you may rejoice in it *with trembling*, That either God will show you the Fruit of all your Tears, or he will dry them up; and you're to mourn no longer for Wretches that he hath rejected. You'll carry none of this Melancholy into another World; those very Persons that have made your Lives bitter, shall not have it in their power to make your Death so. God will unchain the Affections of Nature, and let them be no more Prisoners to that which has done them so much harm.

2 Tim. iv.  
7.

6. A Satisfaction that we have gone thro the most eminent Services that God hath sent us into the World about, is another Article of this Joy. Thus the Apostle professeth for himself, *I have finish'd my Course*; or, as he calls it here, *fulfill'd the Ministry that I have receiv'd*. He had no more Journys to take in Preaching of the Gospel. This is what

what our Saviour sweeten'd his own Sermon. V. departure by; *Father, the Hour is come, I have glorify'd thee on Earth, I have finish'd the Work that thou gavest me to do*; that is, he had almost done it:

John xvii.

there was but one *Baptism to be baptiz'd with*, and when he had gone thro this, he could say, in the full sense of the Word, *it is finish'd*. Then he bow'd his Head (which is a closing Posture) and gave up the Ghost. I own he comprehended his Design better than we can

do, he knew when his *Hour was come* that he should depart out of the World, and go to the Father. We, on the other hand, have all Futurities under a thick Veil, and therefore as long as we are here, must be projecting something new for God. That Question ought to return very often into our Minds, *What shall I render unto the Lord?*

John xiii. r.

And on this account a good Man can scarce be taken off, but it is in pursuit of a Scheme that he hath laid. Whenever Death comes, he must receive it in some degree of a remorse; *My purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my Heart.*

Psal. cxvi.

12.

Job xvii. 11.

But yet there is a particular share of Duty that every one hath committed to him, of *serving our own Generation according to the Will of God*. And when we have reason to think that this is done, our Souls will have the fewer ties to keep them here. A good Man

Acts xiii. 36

can-

Serm. V.

Mr. Isaac  
Ambrose.Mr. Whit-  
aker of  
Leeds.Ezal. lxxi.  
28.Isa. xxxviii.  
3.

cannot suppose his Work is over, but he must conclude his Day is so too. There was an eminent Minister in *Lancashire*, who had publish'd a great many excellent Books about the several parts of Practical Religion; and the Day after he sent the last of them to the Press, he told a Person from whose Friend I had the Story, that now he did not imagine God would let him stay much longer here, having brought him to the full length of his Design; and within two Hours after they had parted, he died with very little Sickness, and a great deal of Joy. I do not lead you into an expectation of such a Conduct as this is, or intimate that the generality of Christians are to be guided by these Impressions, or shall know when their Services are almost out: God may refresh his Work and make them fruitful in old Age, until they have shown forth his Strength to this Generation, and his Power to every one that's to come. But yet when a Person hath gone thro some great Affair, which he hopes may be for the Divine Glory, he stands easier to the Call of Heaven. 'Tis usually thought, the reason why *Hezekiah* turn'd his Face to the Wall and wept sore, was not a diffidence of his own State, because he could mingle an Appeal with those Tears, Remember, Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walk'd



*walk'd before thee with a perfect Heart.* Serm. V.  
But the Reformation was then very young and weak in Judah; he came after a wretched King, and as yet he had no Son, whom he might introduce into the Design; for there were *fifteen Tears added to his Life*, and there were but twelve in *Manasseh's* when he began to reign.

I must here also add, that many of God's People have had their Heads full of Concerns, which they were never to execute. You know that it was the Case of *David*, who *found in his Heart* Acts vii. 46. *to build a Tabernacle for the Lord of Jacob*, and *prepar'd for it abundantly before his Death*; and *he did well in that it was in his Heart.* But he must not see so much as the Foundation of it laid. Now when it happens thus, God some way or other brings off the Mind from what it us'd to be set upon. The Christian either finds that it is not of that Importance he took it for, or that it shall prosper in other hands. But it hath proved a kind Article in the satisfaction of a Believer, that God hath let him live either to see the Matter accomplish'd, or put into a good way: He has obtain'd some Blessing of Value to his Family or the Divine Glory that his Thoughts have been taken up with; and surviv'd the Darkness that lay for a long while upon it. Good old *Simeon* had it

Serm. V. it reveal'd to him that he should not taste  
 of Death till he had seen the Lord's  
 Luk. ii. 26. Christ. Now after this Impression, no-  
 thing could incline him to be gone be-  
 fore that time; but how ready was he  
 to fold those Arms for the great Sleep,  
 that had held the Holy Child Jesus? Now  
 Ver. 29, 30. Lord lettest thou thy Servant depart in  
 Peace, for mine Eyes have seen thy Sal-  
 vation.

7. 'Tis no small Article in this Joy  
 that we finish our Course with, that  
 the last Illness takes us well employ'd.  
 Blessed is that Servant whom his Lord,  
 when he comes, shall find so doing; he  
 is call'd fresh out of Duty. The Faith-  
 ful perisheth, and merciful Men are ta-  
 ken away, they enter into Peace, they  
 shall rest in their Beds, each one walk-  
 in his Uprightness; as if their Reli-  
 gion was not interrupted, but the Re-  
 move made at once from Obedience  
 to Heaven. This is the certain Case  
 of the Martyrs who go out of Tribu-  
 lation; they must have their Robes  
 wash'd and made white. They die in  
 Rev. xii. 11. the full Use of their Faith, overcoming  
 by the Blood of the Lamb, and the Word  
 A&A. vii. 59. of their Testimony. They ston'd Stephen  
 calling upon God, in the very Act of  
 Prayer. A Good Man does not love  
 to be surpris'd by any thing that would  
 be dishonourable to his Name, or a  
 Clog to his Conscience. He desires to  
 die

die clean, as well as safe; and for Serm. V.

this reason Christ bid his Disciples take

heed lest at any time their Hearts should Luk. xxi. 34.

be overcharg'd with Surfeiting, Drunkenness,

and the Cares of this Life,

and that day come upon them unawares:

and what he said unto them he said unto Mar. xiii.

all, Watch. Thus he threatens one of <sup>ult.</sup>

the Churches of Asia, I will come on Rev. iii. 3.

thee as a Thief, and thou shalt not know

in what Hour I will come upon thee.

'Tis an ungrateful Circumstance, to

have the Distemper that carries me off,

introduc'd by an Excess of Pleasure, or

a Fatigue in Business: 'Tis not so

handsom, so decent, for Death to find

the Christian, where he should not be.

Tho the Case may be secure enough,

when People are sav'd so as by Fire,

yet surely we should desire something

more for our selves: We had rather

be in another Posture, looking for, and 2 Pet. iii. 12,

hasting to the Coming of the Day of <sup>14.</sup>

God; that when we are all found of

him, it may be without spot and blame-

less.

We are apt to be afraid of disordering

our selves by the Duties of Wor-

ship, and let cold Weather, and ill

Roads, or a little Inclemency of the

Season be an excuse. I cannot pretend

to give you the full Extent of that

Saying, God will have Mercy, and not

Sacrifice; or settle the whole Debate

between

Serni. V. between a Pretence founded on those  
 ~~~~~ Words, and the plain Demand of o-  
 Heb. x. 25. thers, *Forsake not the assembling of your
 selves together.* The Application of
 such Rules must be left to every one's
 Conscience; but "for my self I will
 " say, That I do not think it shall
 " make a Disease the more grievous
 " to me, that I got it in a Meeting.
 " If the thing is true, I do not sup-
 " pose I shall die with any Regret at
 " my Duty, or say, that I have serv'd
 " a hard Master. I can make greater
 " Ventures of my Health there, than
 " I dare in any other Place; and if
 " the Son of Man shall find me so doing,
 " 'tis both as he and I wish it may be."
 I am not by this persuading you to
 throw all your Care into Devotion.
 The Providence of God hath given you
 particular Employments, and it is not
 wrong to be found in them. But if
 you make conscience of worshipping
 him, alone and in your Families, morn-
 ing and evening, let Death come when
 it will, it cannot be many hours after
 you have been upon your Knees. Some
 have desir'd, with Submission to the
 Will of God, that they might have
 their Summons either in the Solemn
 Assembly, or soon after; that he
 would give them their Last Call where
 he gave them their First; and the
Spirit and the Bride may say together,
 Come

Come away: tho, as I said, this ought Serm. V. to be with a profound and awful Duty to the Divine Will, because it is not for us to know the Times and Seasons that the Father hath reserv'd in his own Power.

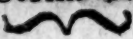
8. The Joy of a dying Hour is oftentimes increas'd, from a Persuasion that the Work of God will be well carry'd on when we are remov'd. Thus did Moses *incourage Joshua*, and it made him easier to die short of *Jordan*, because he knew God would carry *Israel* over it. So did *David* take leave of *Solomon*, *I go the way of all Flesh, be thou strong therefore, and show thy self a Man.* They that have suffer'd for the Cause of Religion, could never have gone off with such a Triumph as they did, if they had not believ'd that God would revive it. This quiets them *under the Altar*, as it hath done before upon the Scaffold, that they should rest but a little while, and God would then *avenge their Blood upon them that dwell on the Earth.* 'Tis oftentimes known that God's People have had more Assurance of this when they died, than they us'd to have whilst they lived. *Joseph's Faith* in that moment is put into the Roll, that he made mention of the *Departing of the Children of Israel*, and gave Commandment concerning his Bones. For this

1 Kings ii. 2.

Rev. vi. 9, 10

Serm. V. this Cause several of them would not
 ~~~~~ accept of Deliverance, that they might  
 Heb. xi. 35. obtain a better Resurrection: not so  
 much a Resurrection for themselves as  
 the Interest they were engag'd in; that  
 this might rise again in a more glorious  
 Way than it could have done, had they  
 taken any Liberties with Conscience  
 to serve it.

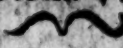
And it is but agreeable to the usual  
 Methods of Grace, for a Death-bed to  
 be the Seat of our best Convictions  
 this way: whilst we live, our Faith is  
 encumber'd with Sense; we are apt  
 to weigh the Promises in the Scales of  
 Imagination; 'tis hard to believe in  
*Hope and against Hope*, and there seems  
 to be abundance of Argument in that  
 Sentence, *By whom shall Jacob arise, for  
 he is small?* But Faith is put into the  
 way of doing greater things than  
 these; when we come to die, we have  
 then our Dependance upon a Divine  
 Power to carry us thro Difficulties of  
 more Importance; we give up our  
 Souls into his Hand, we trust our Bo-  
 dies in his Care, with a full Assurance  
 that they shall both meet again; and  
 when we are brought to believe so  
 much for our selves, we have the less  
 dread about a publick Interest of Christ  
 in the World. This was the way that  
 Abraham's Faith did so great an Office,  
 he argu'd from what God would do  
 for

for himself in the Hope that he had of *Serm. V.*  
Mercy for a Family; and they are the   
very Blessings that we depend upon  
in the Hour of Dying. Thus, when  
a Promise was given him, *that he should*  
*be the Father of many Nations*, there  
was a great deal lay in the way of it;  
but *he believ'd the God that quickens* *Rom. iv. 17.*  
*the Dead, and calls the things that are*  
*not, as tho they were.* And so, when he  
*offer'd up Isaac*, he sustains himself up-  
on that which gave him an Assurance  
of what was more Personal, *He ac-*  
*counted that God was able to raise him* *Heb. xi. 19.*  
*up from the Dead.* And thus may we  
do: A Power that can remove the Soul  
to Heaven now, and in time fetch up  
the Body thither too, may be trusted  
with the Concerns of a Redeemer's  
Kingdom, whatever Danger lies upon  
it. We join our Faith in both Cases,  
and see who it is that can *make these*  
*dry Bones live.*

9. Another Supply to this Joy ari-  
seth from an Opinion how soon we  
shall get into the Angels Company,  
and how well we shall be under their  
Care. 'Tis indeed a little melancholy  
to see Friends either pitying us or la-  
menting themselves, taking their last  
leave with Tears, whilst we are doing  
it with Groans; but we shall quickly  
get from them into a Society where  
there's not an uncheerful Face, among  
those

Serm. V. those that are as glad to meet us, as the others were sorry to part with us. The Angels were appointed to carry the Soul of *Lazarus* into *Abraham's Bosom*; and the Thoughts of their conveying us to Happiness will afford a Pleasure upon two accounts, as they have been old Friends, and as from this time they will be open Acquaintance: They have done us many good Offices, *encamping round about them that fear the Lord to deliver them*; but all this while we did not know their Names, nor see their Persons. They follow us with a Train of invisible Bounties; but the last Office of Love they do us in this World, is to fetch us well out of it, and then we are to know them: From being their Charge, we go up to be their Company. They have attended in Our Assemblies, and we must be carry'd to theirs: We certainly go to sing with them, tho we cannot tell they ever did so with us. That Holy Minister, *the End of whose Conversation* I mention'd under a former Head, had this other Circumstance in his Case, that the last Piece he sent to the Press is call'd *Communion with Angels*; where, among other Services, he takes notice they attend us in a dying Hour. Upon his Return from the Company he retir'd into his Closet, complain'd of an Indisposition, and the first Person that came in found



found him breathing his last in these Serm. V. words: "Now Angels do your Work." 

10. There must be *a looking to Jesus* Heb. xi. 3.

who has been *the Author*, and who is now to be *the Finisher of our Faith*:

*He had a Joy set before him*; or, as the word may be render'd, it hung over against the Cross, that his last Looks might be upon it. Now he that hath made the Experiment, and knows how fit the Application of so much Comfort was to himself, will be sure to repeat it in the Death of his People.

You consider him, First, as *able to keep* Jude 24.

*you from falling*, when Satan pusheth hard at you; and, Secondly, as one that will *present you faultless before his Glory with exceeding Joy*. He is *the Mediator of the Covenant* between God and You; He is *the Surety of a Covenant* between you and himself. All the

Care he hath for you in another World, is an Argument of his Concern about you in the Act of removing, *I go to* Job. xiv. 2, 3.

*prepare a Place for you*; this does not signify his deserting them, leaving them to shift for themselves, and get as well as they can thither: No, the very Provision in Heaven takes into it another Kindness; *If I go and prepare a Place for you, I will come again and receive you to my self, that where I am, there you may be also*. If you believe the one, you may reckon upon the other: it

would

Serm. V. would be losing not only them, but all his own Pains, should he not be as ready on a Death-bed as he's in the Palace.

Thus have I gone thro those things that the Scripture hath first offer'd to my Thoughts, both as the Preparations and Ingredients of a Joy with which the Believer finisheth his Course; the former I recommend to your Care, and the latter to your Hope. He that hath crucify'd the World, is before-hand with Death; what he hath learnt to despise, he'll soon be taught to leave; and how happy is it to take our Flight with Wings full spread, under all the

Joh. xiv. 4.

Truth of that Character, *Whither I go, ye know, and the Way ye know?* What David saith of himself, is transfer'd to the great Redeemer; and as he had it in the Quality of our Publick Head, from him it descends down again to us.

Psal. xvi. 9,  
10, 11.

*His Flesh would rest in Hope,* and there was something as great for the other Part, *Thou wilt show me the Path of Life;* a clear and open Way well guarded by Angels, and supply'd with the Assurance of what I am going to; 'tis a good Road to a better Home: the very Passage hath something of that Glory that will be compleat in the Entertainment; for *in thy Presence is Fulness of Joy, and at thy right Hand are Pleasures for evermore.*



F I N I S.